

Bite Spoon

Hamburger Helper Recipe: Easy Ground Beef Meal

10 min Prep time	**25 min** Cook time	**35 min** Total time
6 Servings	**Easy** Difficulty	**American** Cuisine

Ingredients

For the Beef and Pasta

- [ ] 1 tbsp olive oil
- [ ] 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- [ ] 1 lb lean ground beef (85/15 or 90/10)
- [ ] 2 cloves garlic, minced
- [ ] 1 tsp chili powder
- [ ] 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- [ ] 1 tsp salt, or to taste
- [ ] 1/2 tsp black pepper, or to taste
- [ ] 8 oz elbow macaroni, uncooked

For the Creamy Sauce

- [ ] 2 tbsp tomato paste
- [ ] 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- [ ] 2 cups beef broth
- [ ] 1 cup whole milk
- [ ] 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, freshly shredded
- [ ] Fresh parsley, chopped, for garnish (optional)

Instructions

1. First, let's get that lovely base flavor going. Place a large, deep skillet or a Dutch oven over medium-high heat and add a little swirl of olive oil. Once it shimmers beautifully, add your finely chopped onion and let it cook for about 3-4 minutes, just until it starts to soften and turn a little translucent. Then, add the ground beef to the pan. I like to break it up with a wooden spoon, but then let it be for a bit to get a nice brown sear on the bottom. Season it generously with salt and pepper, then add the minced garlic, chili powder, and paprika. Cook for just another minute until the garlic and spices smell absolutely amazing. Go ahead and drain off any excess fat if you feel it's necessary.

2. Now for the part where we build that gorgeous, creamy sauce. Right into the pan with the beef, add the tomato paste and Worcestershire sauce, and give it a good stir to coat the meat. Then, pour in the beef broth and the whole milk. Whisk everything together right there in the pan until the tomato paste dissolves and you have this beautiful, savory base. Bring the whole mixture to a gentle simmer, making sure to scrape up any of those delicious browned bits from the bottom of the pan—that's pure flavor right there. This step always makes my kitchen smell so, so good and comforting.

3. Once your sauce is gently bubbling away, it's time to add the pasta. Pour in the uncooked elbow macaroni and give it a really good stir to make sure all the pasta is submerged in the liquid. This is key, as the pasta will cook directly in this flavorful sauce. Reduce the heat to a steady low, cover the skillet with a lid, and let it simmer gently. You'll want to cook it for about 10-12 minutes, or until the pasta is tender and has reached that perfect al dente bite. I like to peek in and give it a stir once or twice just to make sure nothing is sticking to the bottom of the pan.

4 Okay, we're at the final, most glorious step. The pasta should be cooked and the sauce should have thickened up nicely from all the starches. Remove the skillet from the heat completely. Now, sprinkle in your freshly grated sharp cheddar cheese. Don't just dump it; scatter it over the surface. Gently stir until the cheese is completely melted and the sauce is velvety, creamy, and clinging to every single piece of pasta. Let it sit for a minute or two before serving. This allows the sauce to set up just a little bit more and become even more luscious. Garnish with some fresh parsley if you have it; it adds a lovely touch of color and freshness.

Nutrition per serving

580 kcal	35 g	45 g	28 g
Calories	Protein	Carbs	Fat

Tips & notes

- For the creamiest results, it's really important to use whole milk. Lower-fat milks have a tendency to separate or curdle when simmered, and they won't give you that same luscious, velvety texture in the final sauce. It's a small detail that makes a huge difference in the final dish.
- Don't be tempted to overcook the pasta! Remember that it will continue to cook a little from the residual heat in the pan even after you take it off the stove. You want it to be perfectly al dente, with a slight bite, not soft or mushy. Tasting a noodle right before the timer goes off is always a good idea.
- Let the finished dish rest for a few minutes before you serve it. This short resting period is so important because it allows the sauce to thicken slightly and cling to the pasta perfectly. It will seem a little liquidy right after you stir in the cheese, but it sets up beautifully as it cools for a moment.