

Skillet Chili Mac with Corn and Green Chiles

SERVES Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

While developing our skillet chili mac recipe, we started by sautéing the onions and garlic with chili powder and cumin, which helped bloom the flavors of the chili and reduced its harshness. We added lean ground beef to the skillet and now had a “taco seasoned” mixture that was waiting for the tomato component to transform it into chili. We added a can of tomato sauce, then sprinkled in the macaroni and poured in the water, which reduced and bound the dish together as it simmered and the pasta cooked. As for the cheese component, we settled on a shredded Mexican cheese blend (a combination of cheddar, Monterey Jack, asadero, and queso blanco cheeses), widely available in supermarkets.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, minced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- Salt
- 3 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about 1 tablespoon)
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 pound 90-percent lean ground beef
- 2 cups water

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

***** If you can't find shredded Mexican cheese blend, substitute 1 cup each shredded Monterey Jack cheese and shredded cheddar cheese. To make the dish spicier, add 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes along with the chili powder. You can substitute small shells (about 2 1/2 cups) for the macaroni.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Heat the oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add the onion, chili powder, cumin, and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring often, until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in the garlic and brown sugar and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the beef and cook, breaking apart the meat, until lightly browned and no longer pink, 3 to 5 minutes.

- 1** (15-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 8** ounces (about 2 cups) elbow macaroni (see note)
- 1** (8-ounce) package shredded Mexican cheese blend (2 cups) (see note)
- 1** cup frozen corn
- 1** (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chiles, drained
- 2** tablespoons minced fresh cilantro leaves
- Ground black pepper

2 Stir in the water and tomato sauce, then add the pasta. Cover, increase the heat to medium-high, and cook, stirring often and adjusting the heat to maintain a vigorous simmer, until the pasta is tender, 9 to 12 minutes.

3 Off the heat, stir in 1 cup of the cheese, corn, chiles, and cilantro. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle the remaining 1 cup cheese over top, cover, and let stand off the heat until the cheese melts, 2 to 4 minutes. Serve.