

Easy Taco Chili

Serves 4 **Cooking Time** 6 to 8 hours on Low or 3 to 5 hours on High

✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: When busy weeknights loom ahead, it's handy to have a seriously easy, family-friendly slow-cooker chili in your repertoire. Choosing frozen chopped onions and garlic powder kept us from needing our knife and cutting board while a packet of store-bought taco seasoning put an end to rummaging through the spice cabinet. Instead, we simply opened the packet and combined the spice mixture with the other aromatics before cooking. Canned tomatoes and black beans and frozen corn also helped this chili come together quickly. The onion and spice mixture will look soupy after microwaving. Serve with your favorite chili garnishes.

- 2 cups frozen chopped onions (or 2 onions, minced)**
- 1 (1-ounce) packet taco seasoning**
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 1½ teaspoons garlic powder (or 6 garlic cloves, minced)**
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed**
- 1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce**
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes**
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar**
- 1 slice high-quality white sandwich bread, torn into quarters**
- 2 tablespoons whole milk**
- 1 pound 85 percent lean ground beef**
- Salt and pepper**
- 1 cup frozen corn**

- 1.** Microwave onions, taco seasoning, tomato paste, oil, and garlic powder in bowl, stirring occasionally, until onions are softened, about 5 minutes; transfer to slow cooker.
- 2.** Stir beans, tomato sauce, tomatoes with juice, and sugar into slow cooker.
- 3.** Mash bread and milk into paste in large bowl using fork. Mix in ground beef and ¼ teaspoon pepper using hands. Stir beef mixture into slow cooker, breaking up any large pieces. Cover and cook until beef is tender, 6 to 8 hours on low or 3 to 5 hours on high.
- 4.** Let chili settle for 5 minutes, then remove fat from surface using large spoon. Break up any remaining large pieces of beef with spoon. Stir in corn and let sit until heated through, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

SMART SHOPPING GARLIC SUBSTITUTE

For home cooks who don't use garlic on a regular basis, there are myriad garlic products available that seem like a convenient substitution for fresh: garlic powder, made from garlic cloves that are dehydrated and ground; dehydrated minced garlic, which is minced while fresh and then dehydrated; and garlic salt, which is typically 3 parts salt to 1 part garlic powder. When garlic is the predominant flavor in a recipe, we have found that nothing comes close to using fresh cloves, but in recipes where garlic is a background flavor and the recipe calls for only a clove or two, in a pinch you can use garlic powder. Substitute ¼ teaspoon of garlic powder for each clove of fresh garlic. We don't recommend dehydrated garlic (it takes a while to rehydrate and is quite mild) or garlic salt (our tasters disapproved of its "super-salty," "chemical" taste).

