

A Sutherland Belle

Crock-Pot BBQ Pulled Pork Chili

I grew up on the Virginia–North Carolina border, where vinegar-based barbecue is the only kind that counts. Tangy, sharp, and just the right amount of spicy, it’s the flavor that belongs on pulled pork sandwiches, dripping down your chin at a family reunion, and bottled in mason jars to cure just about anything that ails you. And while barbecue may be born in summer smoke, this chili is what happens when Southerners get caught in winter weather.

Snow doesn’t come often in the South—but when it does, we act like it’s the apocalypse. Schools shut down if the forecast even hints at flurries. We stampede the grocery store, panic-buying in bulk: three gallons of milk, five loaves of bread, and enough canned beans to build a bunker. Doesn’t matter if your pantry’s already full—you’re going home with a cart that looks like you’re feeding an army through the end of days.

Then comes the neighborly roll call. We check on our mommas, call around to see who still has power, and decide whose house is hosting the snow-day supper. Somebody’s frying cornbread, somebody’s baking a cobbler, and there’s always that uncle who shows up with a case of beer and strong opinions. We may not have chains on our tires, but we’ve got four-wheel drive and enough common sense to turn two inches of snow into a dinner party.

That’s the spirit behind this chili. It’s my love of Carolina barbecue married to the belly-warming comfort of chili—spicy, smoky, tangy, and just a little sweet. A pot that’ll thaw you out faster than a space heater and feed a crowd while the roads stay closed.

Forget the bread and milk—this chili is proof that the best storm survival kit is a simmering pot and the people gathered around it.

INGREDIENTS

- 3-4 pounds boneless pork shoulder roast or country-style ribs
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chipotle powder (*optional*)
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 cans (14.5 ounces), fire roasted tomatoes with garlic

- 1 can (15.5 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 (4 ounces) green diced chiles
- 1 cup (8 ounces) Mexican beer (or beef broth)
- 1 cup beef broth
- ½ cup vinegar-based BBQ sauce
- 2 (15 ounce) cans chili pinto beans (*do not drain*)
- Zest and juice of 1 lime
- Sour cream, green onions, avocado, fresh cilantro, limes, and tortilla chips for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat, warm the oil. Sear the pork on all sides, 2–3 minutes per side, until browned. Transfer to a slow cooker.
2. Add the onion, garlic, chili powder, smoked paprika, cumin, chipotle powder (if using), coriander, salt, pepper, tomatoes, tomato sauce, beer, broth, and barbecue sauce. Stir to combine.
3. Cover and cook on Low for 8–10 hours, until the pork is tender and pulls apart easily.
4. Remove the pork, discard excess fat, shred with two forks, and return the meat to the slow cooker. Stir in the beans, lime zest, and juice. Taste and adjust seasoning with more salt, pepper, or spices as desired. If you prefer a thinner version, add another cup of beef broth.
5. Ladle into bowls and serve hot, garnished with sour cream, green onions, avocado, fresh cilantro, lime wedges, and tortilla chips.

Serving Suggestions

This chili is hearty enough for a meal on its own but pairs beautifully with skillet cornbread or a crisp slaw on the side.

Storage & Freezing

- Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to 4 days.
- To freeze: cool completely, then transfer to freezer-safe containers or bags. Freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat gently on the stovetop or in a slow cooker on Low.