

Cowboy Butter Steak & Potato Soup

Serves 6

You can't call a book *Souper Southern* without giving the South, and Texas, a reason to stand up and holler. And honey, this is it. This is the soup that struts in like it owns the fifty-yard line, wearing boots and a smile. Before we talk steak, let's talk dreams. When I was little, I didn't dream of being a doctor, a lawyer, or even Miss America. I wanted to be a Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader. Not *like* a cheerleader. I mean the real deal — the kind who could kick higher than her GPA and smile through a pulled hamstring.

And I was serious about it, in that way only an eight-year-old raised on Dolly Parton, *Dukes of Hazzard*, and the fantasy of someday booking a ticket on *The Love Boat* can be. In my mind, the cheerleaders weren't just performers. They were Friday-night royalty.

I had it all: the white gogo boots that squeaked when I walked, the pom-poms so fluffy they could have been registered as emotional-support animals, and the unwavering belief that whatever happened on the field was merely a warm-up for the real entertainment.

I never had rhinestone shorts, but I did glue glitter onto my homemade Barbie clothes, each outfit louder, sparklier, and stickier than the last. I sat cross-legged in front of the TV, studying the cheerleaders like it was professional training.

My younger sister had dreams of her own, mostly becoming a hair stylist. A very enthusiastic hair stylist. She practiced on our Barbies, each one receiving a slightly uneven Dorothy Hamill cut, whether she asked for it or not. By the time she finished, our Barbie brigade looked less like beauty queens and more like witnesses in a high-profile salon scandal — bobbed, shaken, and sworn to silence.

None of it phased me. I stayed focused on the dream: the boots, the sparkle, the stage presence. Eventually reality set in. I simply did not possess the physics required. My chest was as flat as my hair, no matter how much Aqua Net or prayer I invested in it.

So no, I wasn't destined for Texas Stadium. But I never lost my love of flair or pageantry or anything that involved a dramatic entrance. That's probably why, all these years later, I'm still bringing that cheerleader energy into the kitchen.

And that's how Cowboy Butter Steak & Potato Soup was born.

If I couldn't be a Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader, then by heavens I was going to cook with the same spirit — with flair, fire, and enough cowboy butter to make the whole South proud.

This soup tastes exactly like what my childhood self imagined “fancy” would be: rich, herby, spicy, a little over-the-top, and the kind of thing that makes people say, “Well bless her heart, she really went for it.”

And I did.

Boots, glitter, and all.

Ingredients

Cowboy Butter

8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
4 cloves garlic, finely grated
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh chives, chopped
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or ½ teaspoon dried)
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 to 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 to 1½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice
½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
½ teaspoon chili powder
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes or cayenne
½ teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper

Soup

2 pounds sirloin or New York strip steak (1–1½ inches thick), patted dry and seasoned with salt and pepper
1 tablespoon neutral oil (such as avocado or vegetable)
1 small yellow onion, finely diced (or 2 large shallots)
2 ribs celery, finely diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
3 to 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour (depending on desired thickness)
5 cups beef broth
3 ½ cups Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice
1 ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 ½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
½ teaspoons smoked paprika
½ teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
½ cup heavy cream
Fresh chives and parsley, chopped, for topping
Additional cracked black pepper, for serving

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- 1. To make the cowboy butter:** In a bowl, combine the butter, garlic, parsley, chives, thyme, Dijon, Worcestershire, lemon juice, lemon zest, smoked paprika, chili powder, red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper. Mix until smooth. Reserve 4 tablespoons for the soup base and 4 tablespoons for finishing.
 - 2. To make the soup:** Heat the neutral oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Sear the steak for 3 to 4 minutes per side, until deeply browned on the outside but still pink inside. Transfer to a cutting board to rest. Do not clean the pot.
 3. Reduce the heat to medium and add 4 tablespoons of the cowboy butter. Once melted, add the onion and celery. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring often, until softened. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute.

4. Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and stir for 2 minutes, until thickened and nutty. Slowly whisk in the beef broth, scraping up any browned bits. Add the potatoes, Worcestershire, Dijon, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 15 to 18 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.
 5. Ladle out about 1 cup of the soup with plenty of potatoes. Lightly mash and return to the pot. This gives the soup a velvety body without making it heavy. Stir in the heavy cream and reduce the heat to low. Do not boil.
 6. Cube the rested steak into ½-inch pieces and add them, along with any juices, to the soup. Warm gently for 2 to 3 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Ladle the soup into bowls. Add a generous spoonful of the reserved cowboy butter to each serving so it melts on top. Finish with chives and cracked black pepper.
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Storage

Refrigerate: Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Reheat: Warm gently over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not boil.

Freeze: Not recommended due to the dairy base and steak.

Note for Success

Good steak deserves a gentle hand. Sear it boldly, rest it fully, and let the soup warm it—not cook it. The difference between tender and tough is about 90 seconds and a little patience.