

GRANNY PLANTS

Garden Squash Chili

the pot that puts a wagonload of winter squash to work

Hearty, a little sweet from the squash, and exactly what a Minnesota winter asks for.

Serves 6 generously | About 1 hour, mostly simmering

You'll need:

- 1 lb ground beef (or turkey, or skip it entirely)
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups winter squash, peeled and cut into bite-size cubes (buttercup or kabocha are perfect)
- 1 quart jar of your tomatoes, or one 28-oz can of crushed tomatoes
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15 oz) kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups beef or vegetable broth (homemade if the freezer bag came through)
- 2 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: 1 cup corn, and a small pinch of cinnamon (trust Granny)

Good to know:

Any dense winter squash works here — butternut, hubbard, or whatever your garden was being extra about this year. Sweeter squash balances the chili spices beautifully.

How to make it

1. Brown the meat.

In a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, brown the ground beef, breaking it up as you go. Drain if needed.

2. Build the base.

Add the onion and cook 3-4 minutes until soft. Stir in the garlic, chili powder, cumin, and smoked paprika and cook 1 minute more, until it smells like dinner.

3. Everything in the pot.

Add the squash, tomatoes (crush them with your spoon if using whole), both beans, and the broth. Stir well and bring to a gentle boil.

4. Simmer low and slow.

Reduce heat, cover partially, and simmer 30-40 minutes, stirring now and then, until the squash is fork-tender. It will thicken as the squash softens.

5. Taste and finish.

Season with salt and pepper. Add the corn and that little pinch of cinnamon if you are feeling it. Simmer 5 more minutes.

6. Serve it up.

Ladle into bowls with shredded cheese, sour cream, or cornbread on the side. Feeding people is the whole point.

Make it soup instead:

Skip the beans, add an extra cup of broth, and simmer until the squash is very soft. Blend about half the pot and stir it back in — you get a creamy squash soup with no cream in sight. A swirl of sour cream on top never hurt anybody, though.

For the freezer:

This chili freezes beautifully for up to 3 months. Cool completely, portion into containers or freezer bags laid flat, and label them — future you will be grateful.