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DIVAS ON A DIME

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PHOTO CREDIT: www.JasonCoblentz.com

PHOTO CAPTION: Ground beef, with protein-rich TVP and beans, becomes a filling for burritos, casseroles or sweet potatoes.



A Pound of Beef, a Little TVP and Dinner to Spare

There's a kindness in opening the freezer at 5:30 and finding that someone has already started dinner. Even better when that someone was you, when you had a skillet out and enough energy to chop an onion.

This Tex Mex beef and bean filling is worth making once and doubly worth making twice. It can become burritos tonight, sweet potatoes next week and a pot of chili on a day when the question "What's for dinner?" feels like a personal attack.

The trick in this Tex Mex filling is TVP, or textured vegetable protein. It takes on the flavors of the skillet and adds protein while helping stretch one pound of beef into about 5 cups of filling.

My family's favorite is the filling spooned over baked sweet potatoes with cheese and green onions. The sweet potatoes and savory filling are wonderful together.

If you have freezer space, double it and set half aside for future you. I use frozen chopped peppers and onions; one 16-ounce bag is just right when I double the recipe.

SUNDAY SUPPER STARTER: TEX MEX BEEF AND BEAN FILLING

Yield: About 5 cups, enough for 6 generously filled burritos
Total Time: 35 mins.

*1/2 cup beef broth or bouillon
1/2 cup dry TVP (textured vegetable protein)
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cups mixed onion and bell peppers, chopped
1 pound ground beef (80/20 blend)
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 tablespoon ground cumin
2 teaspoons chili powder
1 teaspoon brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika, chipotle powder or ancho chili powder
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1 (15-ounce) can black, kidney or pinto beans, drained
1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chiles, undrained
Salt and pepper, to taste*



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Ground beef, with protein-rich TVP and beans, becomes a filling for burritos, casseroles or sweet potatoes.

Heat the broth until steaming. Stir in the TVP and let stand for 5 minutes, or until the broth is absorbed. Set aside.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and peppers and cook until softened and beginning to turn golden, about 5 minutes.

Add the ground beef and break it into small pieces. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the beef is no longer pink and reaches 160 F. Do not drain.

Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the cumin, chili powder, brown sugar, paprika or chili powder, and oregano. Cook for about 30 seconds, until fragrant.

Add the rehydrated TVP, beans and tomatoes with their juices. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is thick enough to mound on a spoon, about 8 to 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. If it becomes too dry, add a splash of broth or water.

TO FREEZE AND REHEAT

Divide the filling into portions sized for your household. Refrigerate or freeze within 2 hours of cooking. For best quality, plan to use them within 2 to 3 months. Refrigerated portions should be used within 3 to 4 days.

Thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then reheat in a covered skillet over medium-low heat, stirring and adding water or broth if needed. You can also reheat a frozen portion in a covered skillet over low heat, stirring as it loosens. Heat the filling throughout to 165 F.

That's enough for six generously filled burritos, but burritos are only the beginning. Spoon it over rice, tuck it into stuffed peppers or turn it into soup, chili or an enchilada casserole.

It's the sort of dinner that makes everyone think we had a plan all along. Because we did.

Lifestyle expert Patti Diamond is the penny-pinching, party-planning, recipe developer and content creator of the website Divas On A Dime — Where Frugal, Meets Fabulous! Visit Patti at www.divasonadime.com and join the conversation on Facebook at [DivasOnADimeDotCom](https://www.facebook.com/DivasOnADimeDotCom). Email Patti at divapatti@divasonadime.com

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