

Cheeseburger Pasta: A Creamy, Cheesy, One-Pot Comfort Meal

Get ready to experience the ultimate comfort food mash-up! This



TIME
8-10 min

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INGREDIENTS

- 6 strips bacon (or 2-3 thick-cut slices)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. ground beef (lean or regular)
- 1 ½ teaspoon steak seasoning (your favorite blend)
- 3 tablespoons butter or bacon drippings
- 3 tablespoons flour (all-purpose)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
- 1 cup milk (whole milk recommended)
- ... cup chicken broth or beef broth
- 2 teaspoons yellow mustard
- 2 teaspoons ketchup
- 2 teaspoons dill pickle juice
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce (like Frank's RedHot, as a flavor enhancer, not necessarily for heat)
- 1 ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese (freshly shredded is best)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. rotini pasta

Swaps and Notes:

Bacon: Thick-cut bacon renders out more flavorful drippings. You can use pre-cooked bacon bits for a shortcut, but cooking fresh bacon yields better flavor and drippings.

Ground Beef: Ground turkey can be used as a leaner alternative to ground beef.

Steak Seasoning: Use your preferred blend. A simple mix of garlic powder, onion powder, paprika, salt, and pepper also works.

Fat for Roux: Using reserved bacon drippings for the roux adds incredible flavor to the sauce. If you don't have enough, supplement with butter.

Pasta: Rotini is great for catching the sauce, but other small-to-medium pastas like macaroni, shell pasta, or bowtie/farfalle also work wonderfully.

Cheese: As noted in the pro tips, freshly shredding cheddar cheese from a block is highly recommended for superior melt and taste compared to pre-packaged shredded cheese. Cracker Barrel Sharp Yellow Cheese is a personal favorite for this recipe. You can also add a touch of Monterey Jack or Colby for extra meltiness.

Hot Sauce: The hot sauce, like Frank's, is added for flavor depth and a subtle tang that enhances the "cheeseburger" profile, rather than making the dish overtly spicy. Adjust to taste.

Broth: Either chicken or beef broth works; beef broth will add a slightly richer, beefier flavor.

Dill Pickle Juice: Don't skip this! It's a secret ingredient that provides that essential tangy pickle flavor, crucial for the cheeseburger experience.

Optional Toppings: Consider a sprinkle of finely diced red onion, chopped pickles, or fresh tomato for garnish.

Instructions:

Cook Bacon: Cut the bacon strips into thirds (or smaller pieces if desired). In a large high-walled skillet or Dutch oven, fry the bacon over low heat until it's wonderfully crispy on both sides. This usually takes about 8-10 minutes. Remove the crispy bacon from the skillet and set it aside on a paper towel-lined plate to drain. Once cooled, roughly chop the bacon. While the bacon cooks, you can measure out your remaining ingredients.

Cook Ground Beef: Drain all but about 1-2 tablespoons of the bacon drippings from the skillet. Increase the heat to medium-high. Add the ground beef to the skillet and season it with steak seasoning. Cook and crumble the ground beef until it's no longer pink and is fully cooked through, about 5-7 minutes. Drain any excess grease from the skillet, then remove the cooked ground beef and set it aside.

Cook Pasta: Bring a large pot of heavily salted pasta water to a rolling boil. Add the rotini pasta and cook to al dente according to package instructions. Once cooked, drain the pasta well and set it aside.

Make the Roux: While the pasta boils, return the same large skillet (which should still have a little bacon drippings) to medium heat. If you don't have 3 tablespoons of bacon drippings left, add enough butter to make 3 tablespoons total. Melt the butter/drippings. Whisk in the 3 tablespoons of

all-purpose flour and stir continuously for 1-2 minutes to create a smooth roux. This will be the base for your creamy sauce.

Build the Cream Sauce: Gradually add the heavy cream in small splashes to the roux, whisking continuously to keep it smooth. Once the heavy cream is incorporated, add the milk and chicken or beef broth in the same manner, whisking until smooth. Stir in the yellow mustard, ketchup, dill pickle juice, Worcestershire sauce, and hot sauce.

Simmer & Add Cheese: Bring the sauce to a gentle boil, stirring occasionally. Then, reduce the heat to low. Let the sauce base cool for a minute to prevent the cheese from clumping. Gradually sprinkle in the 1 ½ cups of freshly shredded cheddar cheese, stirring continuously until the cheese is completely melted and the sauce is creamy and smooth.

Combine & Finish: Add the cooked ground beef and half of the chopped crispy bacon to the creamy cheese sauce in the skillet. Stir to combine.

Gently stir in the drained rotini pasta until it's fully coated in the delicious sauce.

Serve: Transfer the cheeseburger pasta to serving bowls. Sprinkle with the remaining chopped crispy bacon for garnish and extra crunch. Serve immediately and enjoy!

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9. **Pro Tips:: Hot Sauce for Flavor, Not Just Heat:** The hot sauce, like Frank's RedHot, acts as a flavor enhancer, adding tang and depth that is characteristic of a cheeseburger, without necessarily making the dish overly hot or spicy.
10. **Freshly : Shredded Cheese is Best:** For the best melt and flavor, shred the cheese fresh from a block. Packaged shredded cheeses often contain anti-caking agents that can affect how smoothly they melt. Cracker Barrel Sharp Yellow Cheese is a fantastic choice for this recipe.
11. **Pasta : Versatility:** While rotini is recommended, feel free to use other pasta shapes that hold sauce well, such as macaroni, shell pasta, or bowtie/farfalle.
12. **Steak : Seasoning:** I use my own homemade steak seasoning, but widely available varieties like McCormick can also be used effectively.
13. **Protein : Swap:** Ground turkey can be easily substituted for ground beef for a leaner option.
14. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** This Cheeseburger Pasta is a complete, hearty meal on its own, but it pairs wonderfully with simple sides:
15. A crisp side salad with a light vinaigrette to cut through the richness.
16. Warm, crusty garlic bread or soft dinner rolls for scooping up every last bit of sauce.
17. A side of dill pickle slices or some extra chipotle mayo for dipping.
18. For other fantastic cheesy, comforting, and crowd-pleasing meals, you might also enjoy:
19. **My This : Crockpot Nacho Dip is the Reason I Never Have Leftovers** for an irresistible appetizer.
20. **My How I : Turned a Classic Sandwich into the Ultimate Cheesy Hot Dip** for another creative cheesy spin.
21. **Storage and Leftover Tips:** Leftover Cheeseburger Pasta can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3-4 days. The pasta will absorb

more of the sauce as it sits, causing it to thicken. To reheat, gently warm individual portions in the microwave or in a skillet over low heat, adding a splash of milk or broth to loosen the sauce and restore creaminess.

22. More Recipes You Will Love: If you loved the easy, comforting, and incredibly cheesy nature of this pasta dish, you'll find similar satisfaction in these other fantastic recipes:
23. For another easy, cheesy crowd-pleaser perfect for game day, try my [This Beer Cheese Dip is My Favorite Party Starter That Disappears in Minutes](#).
24. If you're looking for a fun, interactive meal that's perfect for gatherings, my [This Walking Taco Bar is My Favorite No-Fuss Way to Feed a Crowd](#) is always a huge hit.
25. And for a timeless : Italian comfort food, don't miss my [Classic Spaghetti Recipe with Homemade Sauce](#).

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