

## Ground Beef with Flair

We recently purchased half of an organically raised cow. That meant we ended up with a freezer full of roasts, steaks, and mostly, ground beef. While I love the ability to open up my freezer and always find an abundant supply of beef, finding creative ways to serve ground beef has now become my mission. Here are some ground beef recipes which are sure to separate you from the Hamburger Helper league.

While all of these recipes use ground beef, you can also use a combination of half ground pork or ground turkey.

### Picadillo

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1/3 cup raisins
- 1 1/2 cups prepared tomato sauce
- 3/4 cup sliced pimiento-stuffed green olives
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 big bag of your favorite tortilla chips or tostada shells
- 3 cups shredded romaine or iceberg lettuce
- 1 1/2 cups coarsely grated radishes (optional)
- Lime wedges
- Shredded Jack cheese

Heat the oil a large heavy skillet over moderately low heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring, until softened. Raise the heat slightly, add the ground beef and cook, stirring and breaking up any lumps, until no longer pink. Pour off any excess fat, add the raisins, tomato sauce, olives, cinnamon, cloves, and salt and pepper, and simmer the mixture, stirring occasionally, until thickened, about 10 to 15 minutes. The picadillo may be made 1 day in advance, kept covered, chilled, and reheated before proceeding. Serve picadillo with tortilla chips and/or tostada shells, with toppings.

## Creamy Spicy Beef Casserole

1 pound ground beef  
1 medium yellow onion, minced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 can black-eyed peas, drained  
1 medium jalapeno, diced  
1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes  
1 (10-ounce) can cream of mushroom soup  
1 (10-ounce) can cream of chicken soup  
1 (10-ounce) can mild enchilada sauce  
A few dashes of hot sauce  
1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning  
Dash cayenne (more to taste)  
1 package corn tortillas  
Butter  
2 cups grated cheddar  
1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, grated  
Chopped green onions, for garnish

Brown the ground beef in large skillet. Drain the excess grease and then add onion, garlic, jalapeno. Cook the mixture for 3 to 5 minutes or until the onion has softened. Add the peas, tomatoes, mushroom soup, chicken soup and enchilada sauce and Cajun seasoning. Add a few dashes of hot sauce. Simmer until warm, about 10 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Tear the tortillas into large pieces. Grease the bottom of a large casserole dish with butter and then line the bottom with the torn tortilla pieces. Spoon on the ground beef mixture into a thin layer and then add a layer of cheese. Add another layer of tortillas and repeat with the beef mixture, finishing with a layer of cheese on top. Cover the casserole dish with foil to prevent the cheese from burning and place in the oven. Cook for 40 minutes or so until hot and bubbly. Remove from the oven and serve.

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## Mousakka

1 medium eggplant, peeled and sliced into 1/2" rounds  
3/4 cup crushed tomatoes

1 pound potatoes, thinly sliced  
Olive oil  
1 cup Parmesan, grated  
1 large onion, minced  
2 cups plain whole yogurt  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
3 eggs, lightly beaten  
1 ½ pound ground beef  
¾ cup light cream  
½ teaspoon nutmeg  
Butter  
½ teaspoon cinnamon

Preheat oven to 375. Brush eggplant rounds with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in large skillet and brown eggplant over medium high heat. Remove to a paper towel to drain. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in same large skillet and cook onion and garlic for 3 minutes. Add the ground beef and brown completely. Drain and return to skillet. Add the spices, and tomatoes. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes. In a second skillet, heat 3 tablespoons olive oil and brown potato slices on both sides. Remove to a paper towel to drain and season with salt and pepper. In a buttered baking dish, layer potatoes, meat, eggplant and top with Parmesan. In a medium bowl, combine yogurt, eggs and cream. Season with salt and pepper and pour over casserole. Let casserole sit for 10 minutes and then bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown and bubbly. Allow casserole to sit for 15 minutes before serving.

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#### Swedish Meatballs

1 tablespoon butter  
1 tablespoon minced onions  
2/3 cup fresh bread crumbs  
1 cup milk  
1 ½ pound lean ground beef  
2 large egg yolks  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1/4 teaspoon grated nutmeg  
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice  
4 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
2 cups beef stock

In a small, heavy skillet over medium-high heat, melt 1 tablespoon butter. Add the onions and saute, stirring often until soft, about 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

In the large bowl of an electric mixer, combine the bread crumbs and milk. Let stand until soft, about 1 to 2 minutes. Add the reserved onions along with the beef, egg yolks, salt, pepper, nutmeg, and allspice. Beat on low speed until smooth. Turn the mixer to high speed and beat until the mixture is light in color and fluffy, about 10 minutes. Using 2 spoons dipped in cold water, shape the meat into 1-inch balls.

In a large skillet over medium heat, melt 4 tablespoons butter. Cook the meatballs in batches of about 15 to 20 at a time and brown on all sides. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain briefly on paper towels before removing to a warmed serving platter. Cover to keep warm. When all the meatballs are cooked, reduce the heat to low and add the flour to the skillet. Cook, stirring, until lightly browned. Slowly add the beef stock. Cook, whisking, until the gravy is thick and smooth. Strain, if desired. Pour sauce over meatballs and serve with cooked egg noodles.

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### Stuffed Red Peppers

4 large red bell peppers  
1 ¼ pound ground beef  
1 medium onion, minced  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
¼ teaspoon onion powder  
¼ teaspoon garlic powder  
¼ teaspoon cayenne  
1 cup cooked rice  
1/2 cup jarred cheese and salsa  
1/2 cup sour cream  
1 cup diced tomatoes

1/2 cup chopped green onions (green part only)

1 cup hot water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Start by cutting the peppers in half lengthwise, leaving the stems intact, and halving them also. Remove the seeds and ribs inside the peppers.

Using a hot skillet, saute the ground beef, onion, garlic, onion powder, garlic powder, and cayenne. Saute until onions become translucent. Drain the fat off. Add the rice, cheese, sour cream, tomatoes, green onion tops. Mix well and stuff the mixture into the peppers. Pour hot water into a shallow casserole large enough to hold all of the peppers. Place the stuffed peppers in the dish, cover with foil and bake for 45 minutes.