Homemade Sloppy Joes

©*From the Kitchen of Deep South Dish*

Ingredients

- 1/2 tablespoon cooking oil (olive, canola, corn, vegetable)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 of a medium sweet bell pepper (any color), chopped
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 pound ground beef, chicken or turkey or raw sausage (like Italian, Bratwurst, breakfast)
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon Tiger Sauce or other hot sauce, or to taste, optional
- 1 (15 ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 6 hamburger buns

Instructions

1. Heat oil over medium heat in a large skillet.
2. Add the onion, bell pepper and celery and cook until softened but not brown, about 4 minutes.
3. Add the meat and cook until cooked through and no longer pink, breaking the meat up with a meat masher. Drain off or use paper towels to dab away any excess oil if necessary.
4. Stir in the Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, tomato sauce, ketchup, salt and

pepper. Simmer uncovered for about 15 minutes or until mixture begins to thicken and liquid is reduced.

5. Taste and adjust seasonings as desired.
6. Meanwhile, brush the bun bottoms with the melted butter and in a separate skillet or on a stove top grill, toast the buns.
7. Spoon mixture evenly among buns and serve with baby carrots, or a side of ranch style beans, baked beans, waffle fries, tater tots or potato chips, a side salad and a pickle.

Notes

Serve these on dinner rolls for Sloppy Sliders on game day. Mix it up by using half ground beef and half ground breakfast sausage. Try adding in a can of drained Rotel tomatoes for an extra kick! If you're out of tomato sauce, I have substituted a can of condensed tomato soup with great success.

For the Slow Cooker: The beauty of the slow cooker is that you can literally dump everything in and let it go, 6 to 7 hours on low or 3 to 4 hours on high. If you prefer using chuck, brown the meat off as above and drain. Otherwise, as with all ground beef crockpot meals, always use a leaner ground sirloin or round with a 10 to 15% fat ratio. I personally prefer to brown off ground beef just enough to render and drain the fat.

Instant Pot/Electronic Pressure Cooker: Set to sauté and prepare as above, cooking meat just long enough to render off fat; drain off most of the fat. Add veggies and let cook 2 minutes; add all of the remaining ingredients up to and including ketchup; seal and cook on high pressure for 8 minutes. Let pressure release naturally. Tap cancel, remove lid and switch to sauté, cooking to desired consistency, stirring often and scraping up from the bottom to prevent burning. Tap cancel and set to warm; taste and adjust salt and pepper as needed.

Sloppy Joe Bake: Prepare as above. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Shred 3 cups of cheese and butter cut side of 4 hamburger buns. Transfer meat mixture to a 9 x 13 inch baking dish and top with 2 cups of cheese. Place buns on top of meat and cheese, buttered side up. Sprinkle remaining cheese on top. Bake uncovered for about 25 minutes, or until browned on top.

Sloppy Janes: Prepare as above, except substitute ground turkey for the beef. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed.

Buffalo Chicken: Prepare as above, except substitute ground chicken, reduce tomato sauce to an 8 ounce can and add 1/2 cup of buffalo sauce or hot sauce. Drizzle sandwich with Ranch or Bleu Cheese dressing, if desired.

Pizza Sloppy Joes: Substitute homemade pizza sauce, or a jar of your favorite commercial brand for the tomato sauce and stir in 3 ounces of chopped pepperoni or turkey pepperoni. Spoon meat mixture on bottom buns and place about 1 tablespoon of shredded Mozzarella on each bun. Pass under the broiler to melt cheese and serve immediately.

Tex-Mex Sloppy Joes: To the meat sauce add 1 or 2 jalapeno peppers (remove seeds and ribs to keep it on the milder side), 2 teaspoons of chili powder and 1/2 teaspoon each of cumin and ground coriander - or all seasonings to taste. Add a couple splashes of a good Mexican beer if you have it.

Bacon Cheeseburger Sloppy Joes: Prepare as above, except omit oil and saute 6 slices of bacon until the fat is rendered and bacon is crispy; remove bacon and set aside, chop once cooled. Add the vegetables to the bacon drippings and cook until softened. Proceed with recipe as above, adding half of the bacon and one cup of cheddar cheese just before serving. Garnish sandwiches with the remaining bacon, mustard, pickles and additional shredded cheese, as desired.

Deep South Tavern Style "Loose Meat" Sandwiches: Prepare meat as above, except, omit tomato sauce, increase ketchup to 1/3 cup and add 1 tablespoon each apple cider vinegar, light brown sugar and mustard (Creole, brown or yellow).

"Mississippi" Sloppy Joes: Measure out 1/2 cup of sliced pepperoncini peppers and chop. Stir in a packet of dry ranch seasoning and au jus gravy mix to season the meat and add the chopped peppers and 1 tablespoon of the brine. Then stir in the Worcestershire, hot sauce, tomato sauce and ketchup. Taste and add salt and pepper only as needed. Simmer uncovered for about 15 minutes or until mixture begins to thicken and liquid is reduced.

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