

Treasure Barrel

Cheesy Taco Pasta: Easy One-Pot Dinner Recipe

10 min Prep time	**25 min** Cook time	**35 min** Total time
6 Servings	**Easy** Difficulty	**American / Tex-Mex** Cuisine

Ingredients

For the Taco Pasta

- [ ] 1 tbsp olive oil
- [ ] 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- [ ] 2 cloves garlic, minced
- [ ] 1 lb lean ground beef (85/15 or 90/10)
- [ ] 1 packet (1 oz) taco seasoning, or 2-3 tbsp homemade
- [ ] 1 tsp chili powder
- [ ] 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- [ ] 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- [ ] Salt and black pepper to taste
- [ ] 3 cups beef broth
- [ ] 1 can (15 oz) tomato sauce
- [ ] 2 cups uncooked medium pasta shells
- [ ] 4 oz cream cheese, softened and cubed
- [ ] 2 cups shredded cheese blend (cheddar and Monterey Jack recommended)

Optional Toppings

- [ ] Sour cream or plain Greek yogurt
- [ ] Chopped fresh cilantro or green onions
- [ ] Crushed tortilla chips
- [ ] Diced avocado or tomato
- [ ] Sliced jalapeños

Instructions

1. First, let's build our flavor base. Place a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat and add the olive oil. Once it's warm and shimmering, add the chopped onion and cook for about 3-4 minutes, just until it starts to soften and turn translucent. Then, add the ground beef to the pot. Use a spoon to break it apart into small crumbles and cook until it's nicely browned all over, which usually takes about 5-7 minutes. If there's a lot of excess grease, carefully drain it off. Now, stir in the minced garlic, taco seasoning, chili powder, paprika, and cumin. Let this cook for about a minute more, stirring constantly, until the spices are fragrant. This little step of toasting them really deepens the flavor. Season with a bit of salt and pepper.

2. Time for the one-pot magic to begin. Pour the beef broth and tomato sauce directly into the pot with the seasoned beef. Give everything a good stir, using your spoon to scrape up any flavorful browned bits that might be stuck to the bottom of the pot—that's pure gold! Next, add the uncooked pasta shells and stir again to make sure they are mostly submerged in the liquid. This is how they'll cook and soak up all that incredible flavor. It's so much better than boiling them in plain water.

3. Now, bring the mixture to a gentle simmer. Once you see it bubbling, reduce the heat to low, cover the pot with a lid, and let it cook for about 10-12 minutes. You'll want to give it a stir once or twice during this time to prevent the pasta from sticking to the bottom. The pasta is done when it's tender and has absorbed most of the liquid. The sauce should be thick and clinging to the pasta shells beautifully. It should look and smell absolutely divine at this point.

4. Here comes the best part—the cheese! Turn off the heat completely. Add the softened, cubed cream cheese and stir it in until it's fully melted and the sauce becomes wonderfully creamy and luscious. Then, sprinkle the shredded cheddar and Monterey Jack cheese evenly over the top. Place the lid back on the pot for just 2-3 minutes to allow the cheese to melt into a gooey, irresistible blanket. Give it one last gentle stir to combine everything, and then serve it up immediately while it's hot and bubbly. This dish is pure comfort, similar in spirit to a cozy creamy pasta but with a fun taco twist.

Nutrition per serving

580 kcal	32 g	45 g	30 g
Calories	Protein	Carbs	Fat

Tips & notes

- I really recommend shredding your own cheese for this. Pre-shredded cheeses have additives to prevent caking that can make your sauce less smooth. Taking a few extra minutes to grate a block of cheese makes a world of difference in the final texture; it's so much creamier and melts beautifully.
- Feel free to adjust the taco seasoning to your liking. If you prefer it spicier, add a pinch of cayenne pepper or use a hot taco seasoning mix. If you have a homemade blend you love, that works perfectly too. Cooking is all about making it your own, so taste and adjust as you go!
- When simmering the pasta, be sure to keep the heat on low. If it boils too aggressively, the liquid can evaporate too quickly before the pasta has a chance to cook through, and it might stick to the bottom of the pot. A gentle, steady simmer is all you need for perfect results.