

# Tater Tot Sloppy Joe Casserole

Sloppy Joes. We don't know exactly what is is about these admittedly messy sandwiches that we love so much, but whatever it is, it has us completely hooked. While we typically make these every couple weeks for an easy weeknight dinner, we realized when we got home and were getting ready to cook that we forgot to grab buns from the grocery store. While, yes, we could have turned our dinner into more of a chili, we really had a hankering for sloppy joes that just wouldn't quit, so we looked in our freezer and decided to improvise...

When we saw that we had a bag of frozen tater tots in our freezer, all the puzzle pieces fell into place and we knew exactly how this dish would play out: a tasty sloppy joe skillet topped with tots and baked to perfection – it doesn't get better than that! We'll always love a nice squishy bun with our sloppy joes, but don't underestimate the power of deliciously crispy potato pillows that perfectly soak up the sauce from the "sloppiness" underneath. This stuff is so good!

**please continue to Next Page (>) for the full list of ingredients and complete cooking instructions.**

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 (16 oz.) bag frozen tater tots
- 1 (15 oz.) can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce
- 1 1/2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, divided
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 3 cloves garlic, minced, optional

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce  
1 1/2 tablespoons brown sugar  
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon onion powder  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes, optional  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
Extra-virgin olive oil, as needed

## **PREPARATION**

Preheat oven to 425° F.

In a medium bowl, whisk together tomato sauce, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, brown sugar, mustard, onion powder, garlic powder and red pepper flakes.

Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large skillet (or oven-safe pan) over medium-high heat and cook garlic, if using, for 1 minute, or until fragrant.

Add ground beef, season generously with salt and pepper, and cook until browned, then drain off fat.

Pour sauce and pinto beans into beef, and stir until everything is evenly coated. Cook for 5-10 minutes, or until slightly thickened, then spread mixture into an even layer and top with 1 cup of cheese.

Top with tater tots, then sprinkle remaining cheese over the top.

Place skillet in oven and bake for 30 minutes, or until tater tots are crispy and golden brown and cheese is melted.

Remove from oven and let cool 5 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

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