



HAROLD'S BBQ SAUCE

Serve it slightly warm and on the side

BASE RECIPE

- ½ cup strong brewed black coffee
- 1 cup Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce
- ¾ cup quality plain ketchup; we usually use Heinz
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons dark chili powder
- 2 teaspoons table salt
- 2 cups diced yellow onions
- ¼ cup ordinary crushed red pepper flakes, the pizza kind
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup bourbon you like; oakier is better
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- ½ tablespoon ground mustard
- At least ½ cup Brer Rabbit Full Flavor or Blackstrap Molasses, then more to taste

The coffee should be strong ordinary brewed coffee. Missy and I grind our own blend, roughly 80 percent French roast and 20 percent Colombian, and brew it stronger than most folks would. The exact blend does not matter, just make it strong.



THE ONIONS ARE HUGE

Cook the diced yellow onions low and slow in a dry cast-iron skillet with zero oil. I use this rule for caramelized onions in almost everything. Deglaze occasionally with a little water.

For a big sauce day, start them on the stove. Once they are browning, deglaze, stir, and put the skillet in a 275°F oven for an hour or longer. Finish them on the stove. They are ready when they reach the color of brown sugar and begin losing their structure. I would cook them into a paste if it were entirely up to me, but Missy does not want to wait 6 to 8 hours just for onions.

Mince the garlic and cook it dry in cast iron too, using much lower heat. Garlic burns easily. The goal is to deepen its flavor and take the raw edge off without scorching it.

PUT THE SAUCE TOGETHER

While the onions are in the oven, combine everything else except the optional brisket drippings in a large pot over low heat. Add the garlic whenever it is ready. Add the onions when they are ready. Simmer the whole pot on low for at least 1 hour. Longer is fine. Less than an hour is probably not.

Blend the sauce to a medium puree, then press it fairly well through an ordinary spaghetti colander. It does not have to be perfectly smooth. Cheesecloth would work, but it is a mess. We have tried leaving the solids in, and both of us think the strained sauce literally tastes better. I cannot explain it. The paste left behind gets thrown away, which makes us sad every time.

SAVED BRISKET DRIPPINGS

The sauce is good without drippings. Once you get into a rhythm, the drippings put it over the top.

Pour roaster drippings into Mason jars, cool them, and remove enough semisolid fat to leave no more than about 20 percent fat by volume. Label, date, and freeze them. When the sauce has been blended and strained, add thawed drippings gradually to taste, then simmer another 15 minutes.

Missy's working large batch is 6 times the base recipe, about 1 gallon finished, with roughly 1 pint of drippings. Those are practical estimates. Taste it along the way.

We pressure-can large batches in Mason jars, but canning is outside the scope of this process. Refrigerate the sauce after opening if you pressure-can it.