Sauces / Hungary

Hungarian Goulash Paste

A brick-red aromatic paste built on sweet Hungarian paprika, caramelized onions, and rendered beef fat — the concentrated soul of goulash that can be stirred into stock to make the stew, or spread as a condiment.

Time 75 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Yellow onions, finely diced
- ☐ 20 parts Sweet Hungarian paprika
- ☐ 6 parts Garlic cloves, minced
- ☐ 8 parts Tomato paste
- ☐ 1 parts Caraway seeds, lightly crushed
- ☐ 20 parts Lard or beef tallow (or neutral oil)
- ☐ 5 parts Hot Hungarian paprika or smoked paprika
- ☐ 25 parts Green bell pepper, finely diced
- ☐ 2 parts Fine sea salt
- ☐ 15 parts Beef stock

Let's make it.

01 Melt the lard or fat in a wide, heavy-bottomed pan (a cast-iron skillet is ideal) over medium-low heat. Add all the diced onions with a generous pinch of salt. Cook, stirring every 5-7 minutes, for 40-50 minutes total. The onions will go through stages: sweating and turning translucent at 10 minutes, then softening and reducing at 20 minutes, then beginning to caramelize and turn golden at 30 minutes. You want them at deep golden-amber — not dark brown — when the paprika goes in. Do not rush this step; increasing the heat to hurry the process causes bitterness.

02 Add the minced garlic, diced green bell pepper, and lightly crushed caraway seeds to the caramelized onions. Stir and cook for 3-4 minutes over medium heat until the garlic is fragrant and the bell pepper has softened slightly. The garlic should not brown — keep the heat moderate. Add the tomato paste, stir it into the mixture, and fry it for 2 minutes until it darkens to brick-red and smells caramelized.

03 CRITICAL STEP: Remove the pan from the heat entirely, or reduce to the absolute lowest setting. Add all the sweet and hot paprika at once. Stir it into the oil and onion mixture vigorously. The residual heat in the pan is enough — paprika burns in seconds if it hits a hot pan directly, turning bitter and irreversible. Stir continuously for 30-45 seconds until the paprika is fully incorporated and the mixture has turned a uniform, vivid brick-red. Return to the lowest possible heat.

04 Add the beef stock and salt to the paste. Stir to combine — the mixture will loosen into a thick paste-sauce. Simmer on very low heat for 8-10 minutes, stirring frequently, until the stock has reduced and the paste has thickened back to a spreadable, jammy consistency that holds a mound on a spoon. Taste and adjust salt. The paste should be intensely savory, sweet, paprika-forward, and complex. Cool completely before storing — it keeps refrigerated for 2 weeks, or frozen for 3 months.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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