Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 25-30 minutes
Total Time: 35-40 minutes
Intensity Level: Easy (Minimal active time; requires attention during the glazing phase)

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A Note on This Recipe

There is a certain alchemy that happens when you combine smoky, savory sausage with the deep, molasses-rich sweetness of brown sugar. These Brown Sugar Glazed Sausage Bites are the ultimate proof. They are the kind of appetizer that disappears before you can even set the plate down at a party. The exterior becomes a sticky, caramelized shell that shatters slightly when you bite into it, giving way to the juicy, savory meat inside. The secret is the “intensity” of the bake—a high-heat blast to render the fat and crisp the edges, followed by a lower, slower simmer to reduce the glaze into a syrupy coating that clings to every curve of the sausage. Whether you are prepping for a game day feast, a holiday gathering, or just a cozy Friday night in, these bites are deceptively simple and universally loved. Let’s get started.

Ingredients

For the Sausage:

- 2 lbs (900g) smoked sausage (such as kielbasa or andouille), cut into 1-inch rounds
- 1 tbsp olive oil (for greasing the pan)

For the Brown Sugar Glaze:

- 1 cup (200g) packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup (60ml) Dijon mustard (or yellow mustard for a milder flavor)
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp onion powder
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper (optional, for a kick)
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh chives or parsley (for garnish)

Equipment

- Large mixing bowl
- Whisk
- Large skillet or frying pan (oven-safe is best)
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Slotted spoon
- Paper towel-lined plate
- Serving platter with toothpicks

Instructions

Step 1: Prep and Preheat (Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or aluminum foil for easy cleanup. If using a skillet, ensure it is oven-safe. Pat the sausage rounds dry with a paper towel—this is crucial for getting a good sear. In a large bowl, whisk together the brown sugar, Dijon mustard, apple cider vinegar, smoked paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, and cayenne pepper (if using) until you have a thick, smooth paste. Set aside.

Step 2: Sear the Sausage (Time: 5-7 minutes | Intensity: Medium-High)

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Once the oil is shimmering, add the sausage rounds in a single layer (you may need to do this in two batches to avoid overcrowding). Sear for 2-3 minutes per side until they are golden brown and slightly crispy on the edges. The intensity here is high—you want to hear a good sizzle. Do not cook them all the way through; you just want to render some fat and build color. Remove the sausage from the skillet and set aside on a paper towel-lined plate. Drain excess fat from the skillet,

leaving about 1 tablespoon behind.

Step 3: Build the Glaze (Time: 3-4 minutes | Intensity: Medium)

Reduce the heat to medium. Add the butter to the skillet and let it melt. Pour in the brown sugar mixture. Whisk constantly for 2-3 minutes as the sugar dissolves and the mixture begins to bubble. It will smell intensely of caramel and mustard. Be careful not to let it burn—if it starts to darken too quickly, reduce the heat. This stage requires your full attention; the line between caramelized and burnt is thin.

Step 4: Combine and Coat (Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Medium)

Return the seared sausage to the skillet. Toss gently with a spatula to coat every piece in the glossy, amber glaze. The intensity remains medium as you ensure even coverage. The sausage should look glossy and sticky.

Step 5: The High-Heat Bake (Time: 10 minutes | Intensity: High)

Transfer the skillet to the preheated oven (or transfer the sausage and glaze to your prepared baking sheet if your skillet isn’t oven-safe). Bake at 400°F for 10 minutes. This high-intensity blast is what sets the glaze. The sugar will caramelize further, creating a sticky, candied exterior. Halfway through (at the 5-minute mark), remove the pan and toss the sausage with a spatula to ensure they don’t stick and to promote even glazing. Return to the oven.

Step 6: The Low Simmer (Time: 5-8 minutes | Intensity: Low-Medium)

Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F (175°C). Bake for another 5-8 minutes. This lower intensity allows the glaze to thicken into a syrup without burning. The sausage is done when the glaze is thick, bubbly, and clings tightly to the meat. The internal temperature of the sausage should be at least 160°F (71°C). Remove from the oven and let rest for 2 minutes.

Step 7: Garnish and Serve (Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Transfer the sausage bites to a serving platter. Spoon any remaining glaze from the pan over the top. Sprinkle generously with chopped fresh chives or parsley for a pop of color and freshness. Serve immediately with toothpicks for easy eating.

Recipe Notes and Tips

- Make-Ahead: You can sear the sausage and mix the glaze up to 24 hours in advance. Store separately in the fridge. Combine and bake just before serving.
- Slow Cooker Variation: After searing the sausage, place everything (including the glaze) in a slow cooker. Cook on low for 2-3 hours. This is a great “set it and forget it” option, though the glaze won’t caramelize as deeply.
- Spice Level: The cayenne is optional. For a sweeter, milder bite, omit it. For a bolder kick, add a pinch of red pepper flakes to the glaze.
- Sausage Choice: Kielbasa is classic, but feel free to use smoked turkey sausage for a leaner option, or andouille for a spicier, Cajun-inspired version.

Nutrition Information (Per Serving)

Disclaimer: Nutritional values are estimates and will vary based on specific brands and portion sizes. This analysis is for 1 serving (approximately 5 sausage bites) out of 8 total servings.

- Calories: 380 kcal
- Total Fat: 26g
- Saturated Fat: 9g
- Trans Fat: 0g
- Cholesterol: 65mg
- Sodium: 890mg

- Total Carbohydrates: 22g
- Dietary Fiber: 0g
- Total Sugars: 20g (includes 18g added sugars)
- Protein: 14g
- Vitamin D: 0mcg
- Calcium: 20mg
- Iron: 1.2mg
- Potassium: 240mg