



Hot Texas Chili

This authentic-style chili has beef, plenty of peppers--and beer for flavor, too.

Handle Hot Peppers With Care

Capsaicin, the chemical that makes hot peppers hot, causes a painful burning sensation on thin skin, such as that on your lips or under your fingernails, and on mucous membranes, such as the inside of your nose and eyes.

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Once you've cut open fresh hot chiles, do not touch them with bare hands. Always wear rubber gloves, and don't touch your skin--to scratch your nose or adjust your glasses, for example--while wearing the gloves you're using to handle hot peppers.

In addition, don't touch with bare hands the board, food processor bowl and any other utensils you use for hot peppers until you've scrubbed them thoroughly with soap and plenty of water. Purists hold that authentic chili contains only beef, peppers and spices.

Originating as a dish to use up old beef, dress up cheap beef or cook dried beef carried on the trail, chili benefits from plenty of peppers, which add not only flavor but a healthy kick of vitamins (especially A and C) as well.

Suet is also often used in traditional preparations, but the following recipe relies on beer instead for extra flavor.

Ingredients 1 1/2 pounds beef chuck or rump roast, cut into bite-sized pieces 1/4 cup flour 2 tsp. cumin 1 tsp. dried oregano leaves 1 tsp. ground black pepper 3 T. canola or other vegetable oil 1 T. minced fresh garlic 12 ounces dark beer 1 ounce ancho chiles (dried poblanos), stems and seeds removed 2 cups mixed fresh, mild peppers (such as different colors of sweet bell peppers along with a few mild chiles like Anaheim or Hungarian wax); stems, seeds and membranes removed; diced 1/3 to 2/3 cup mixed fresh, hot peppers (such as jalapeno, habenero, chilepiquene, and cayenne); stems, seeds and membranes removed; minced (use more or less depending on personal heat preference). 2 bay leaves 1 tsp. salt 1/4 tsp. cinnamon

Preparation

Place beef chunks, flour, cumin, oregano and black pepper in a large, plastic kitchen bag. Close the bag tightly and shake until the meat is well-coated.

Heat the oil in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan or Dutch oven, and add the floured meat. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until flour is absorbed. Add the garlic, and continue stirring and cooking until the garlic is softened and the meat is well-browned. Pour beer over meat, heat thoroughly and reduce heat to low. Simmer gently, uncovered, until liquid is reduced by about one-third.

Meanwhile, heat two cups of water to a boil and pour over ancho chiles. Soak until peppers are softened, about 20 minutes. Drain off water, reserving 1 cup. Place softened chiles and 1 cup reserved liquid into a food processor and puree until smooth.

Once beer has reduced by one-third, add ancho-chile puree to beef mixture along with all remaining ingredients and 1 cup water. Stir to combine well, increase heat and bring to a gentle boil. Immediately reduce heat to low and simmer gently, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until meat and vegetables are very tender and mixture has thickened. Depending on your stove and your individual texture preference, this can take from 45 minutes to two hours. Remove bay leaves before serving.

Serve chili with homemade or purchased corn tortillas, cornbread muffins or squares, or thick slices of sourdough bread.