



Chili Con Carne

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

1 T cumin seeds

2 medium (roughly 3 by 5 inches) chiles ancho

2 T pure chile powder

2 t ground Mexican oregano

4 strips applewood smoked bacon

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. well marbled beef chuck cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes

Salt

1 medium white onion, chopped

3 cloves of garlic, minced

1 14-ounce can whole San Marzano tomatoes (preferable D.O.P.)**

1 T freshly squeezed lime juice

1 t sugar

1 t masa harina

1 14-oz. can dark red kidney beans, rinsed and drained

Instructions

1. Toast cumin seeds in a small cast iron skillet until lightly browned and fragrant. Cool. Pulverize in a small grinder (such as a coffee grinder used only for spices).*
2. In the same skillet, toast chiles ancho until crisp. Turn over but be careful not to burn. Tear into pieces, discarding stem and seeds, and place in a bowl. Cover with $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups hot water. Set aside.
3. Mix chile powder and oregano together. Add enough water to form a light paste. Set aside.
4. Cook bacon in a large skillet on medium high until crisp. Use a slotted spoon to remove from pan and set aside on a paper towel. Pour bacon fat in a separate container and set aside. When bacon cools, crumble it into small pieces and set aside.
5. Increase heat to medium high and add one tablespoon bacon fat back into pan. Work in batches to brown the beef. Don't crowd or you will steam the beef. Brown on all sides and lightly salt as you cook. Remove from pan and set aside.
6. Add another tablespoon of bacon fat to pan. Add chopped onions and sauté until soft. Add garlic and cook until fragrant. Add chile and oregano paste and continue cooking for another 2 to 3 minutes.
7. Put onions and garlic, beef, bacon and tomatoes (breaking them up with your fingers) into a 6-quart Dutch oven.
8. Pulse ancho chile water in a food processor a few times. (There will still be pieces of chile in the liquid.) Strain into pot and add lime juice and sugar. Bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Then uncover and maintain a bare simmer for another half hour.
9. Mix the masa harina in a small amount of water to make a slurry. Stir into the chili to thicken it. Mix in the kidney beans. Add salt and adjust seasonings to taste.

Serve with any or all of the following garnishes on the side:

grated sharp cheddar

chopped red onion

sour cream

sliced scallions

diced fresh tomatoes

chopped fresh cilantro

*Ground cumin comes in a spice bottle, of course, but if you toast and grind your own, you will be transported to spice heaven by the aroma and fresh taste.

**D.O.P. refers to tomatoes that have been processed in the same place they were grown.

Photography by Bill Brady <<http://www.studio212photo.com>>Recipe by Phyllis Kirigin<<http://sweetpaprika.wordpress.com/>>