

An American original: Cajun

Mixes French cooking and hot Louisiana spice

The melting pot of American cuisine has produced many made-in-America originals for the table.

Tex-Mex, southern country, California cuisine and Cajun are all distinct tastes that have been born out of local ingredients and the culinary heritage of local palates.

Cajun cooking is a happy mix of southern French country cooking and hot Louisiana spice.

Brought to national attention by noted Louisiana chef Paul Prudhomme, Cajun-inspired creations such as Prudhomme's blackened redfish have caught the fancy of diners across the country.

Cajun chops, highly seasoned with two kinds of pepper, can be your introduction to the fiery side of Louisiana soul food.

Not for the timid, these chops call for a soothing side of rice and a cold beverage to quench the fire.

Boneless pork chops make this dish quick and easy to prepare and serve.

And at only 238 calories per serving this flavorful dish belies the notion that calorie counters must forego exciting tastes.

CAJUN CHOPS

4 boneless pork chops, cut 1/2-inch thick
1 Tbsp. paprika
1 tsp. seasoned salt
1 tsp. rubbed sage
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
1/4 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
2 Tbsp. butter

Trim fat from chops as needed, p dry. Combine seasonings; coat chops with seasoning mixture on both sides. Heat butter over high heat just until starts to brown. Put chops in pan, reduce heat to medium. Fry on both sides until dark brown, about 10 minutes. Makes 4 servings.



Cajun chops light up meal time with fiery flavor.

Garbanzos make soup good tasting

• From an old sage: You'll say "Where's the beef?" but it'll be right there, disguised as pork, thanks to a little seasoning.

A colleague suggested combining a liberal amount of sage and some crushed red pepper with ground beef, shaping into patties and frying in a nonstick skillet.

My wife did. It tasted just like pork.

• From the fish monger: Marinate fresh fish overnight with salt, hot pepper and lemon juice. Coat with flour, fry to a golden brown in a hot oil and remove fish. Pour off old oil, add new oil and brown chopped onions. Return fish, pour on tomato sauce or crushed tomatoes, sprinkle on a little thyme and heat through. Tastes great.

• From a nutritionist: "Your recipe for Navy bean soup interested me from the nutritional point of view as well as sounding great to prepare and eat," writes Lorraine B. Jarvis, a registered dietitian from Plymouth.

"So I decided to run an analysis... with my computer program. Not too many calories, great food values. Put milk, bread and fruit with this and you would have it made."

The soup is high in iron, protein and potassium, with no fat or cholesterol. It also contains every except vitamin D, A and B6 are the highest.

One of my favorite bean soups contains garbanzos. It's almost as nutritional and, frankly, is better tasting!



Greg Melikov

GARBANZO SOUP

1 package (12 oz.) garbanzos, soaked overnight
4 ham hocks or pork hocks
2 chorizo (Spanish sausage) links, sliced
1 bay leaf
salt to taste
2 potatoes, cut up
2 Tbsp. cooking oil
1 green pepper, finely chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 tsp. each black pepper and oregano
1 can (6 oz.) tomato sauce

Drain garbanzos, place in large pot, add hocks and chorizo, cover with water, add salt and bay leaf, leave lid ajar and cook on medium heat about 1 1/2 hours, until beans are almost tender. Add potatoes. Heat oil in skillet, add remaining ingredients, cook on medium low heat 5 minutes, stirring, and dump in bean pot. Bring soup to boil, allow to thicken, reduce heat to low, leave lid ajar and cook 25 to 30 minutes. Serves a crowd.

Chocolate pie sure to please

Chocolate Fluff Brownie Pie, with a rich whipped cream and cream cheese filling, will tempt even the most stalwart. Anyone's indulgence will be satisfied with Chocolate-Glazed Orange Brownies, glazed treats with a hint of refreshing orange.

Chocolate Fluff Brownie Pie
1 pkg. brownie mix (with can of chocolate flavor syrup)
2 tbsps. water
2 pkgs. (8 oz. each) cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
2 cups chilled whipping cream
1 bar (1.05 oz.) milk chocolate candy, finely chopped

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease and flour pie plate, 10 x 14 inches. Mix brownie mix (dry) and water. Cut in 1/2 of one of the packages of cream cheese until particles are size of small peas. Pat on bottom and up side of pie plate with greased fingers. Bake until center is set, 20 to 25 minutes; cool. Mix chocolate flavor syrup, the remaining cream cheese, sugar and vanilla. Beat whipping cream in chilled bowl until stiff. Fold whipped cream into cream cheese mixture; spread over crust. Sprinkle with chocolate candy. Refrigerate until set, at least 8 hours. Refrigerate any remaining pie.

CHOCOLATE-GLAZED ORANGE BROWNIE
1 pkg. frosted brownie mix
1 tbsps. orange-flavored liqueur
1 cup powdered sugar
1/4 cup plus 2 Tbsp. margarine or butter, softened
1 1/2 tsp. grated orange peel
2 to 3 tsp. orange juice
2 Tbsp. boiling water

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Bake brownie mix as directed on package except mix in liqueur with the water; cool.

Mix remaining ingredients except water until smooth. Spread over brownies. Squeeze packet of frosting into bowl. Mix in boiling water until smooth. Gently spread over brownies. Refrigerate until glaze is set, about 1 hour. Refrigerate any remaining brownies. 48 brownies.

Selecting meats for microwaving

One of the keys to cooking meat successfully in the microwave oven is to select the proper cut in the appropriate size.

As a general rule, select tender, boneless cuts of meat. Individual items like a chop or meat loaves will cook quickly.

If more than one meat item will be cooked in the microwave oven at the same time, make sure the shape of each item is similar.

THE FOLLOWING MEAT cuts give the some of the best results:

- Ground meat made into patties, meat loaves, meatballs or other main dishes;
- High-quality roasts weighing no more than 3-4 pounds and tied into a compact roll;
- Skinless precooked sausage products;
- Smoked or cured meats, particularly bacon;
- Meat strips or pieces;
- Meats which can be reheated quickly like pre-cooked meats, frozen entrees and leftover dishes.

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