

Rustle up a pot of vegetarian chili in no time at all

BY DANA JACOBI
SPECIAL WRITER

While in Austin, Texas recently, I ordered chili. The dense, slurry bowl of red that arrived contained honest chunks of hand-chopped meat simmered with searingly hot ground chile and perfumed with oregano. Intense aromas of cumin and garlic wafted from the steaming bowl. Only the addition of canned tomato made this different from chili con carne as it was invented in Texas, somewhere back in the 1800's.

In all honesty, I would cook chili, either con carne or meatless, more often if it did not take so much time. When using meat, I want it hand-chopped, so it's nice and nubby, and chopping enough for a worthwhile pot of chili takes a while. For meatless chili, simmering the beans together with all the other ingredients until they knit together with feisty flavor is also time-consuming.

Thinking about this, and about how beans are such a great source of fiber, folacin and other good things, I set out to make a quick-cooking chili packed with the same depth of intense and balanced flavors as those which are slow-cooked.

I started with canned beans. For quick, profound flavor, the answer included a good broth. I used ground chile peppers, though you could use a prepared chili powder. (I prefer the distinctive flavor you get from the individual seasonings. Also, I have a personal aversion to the taste of dried garlic, an important ingredient in chili powder.)

At the end, I thickened the

chili with masa harina. Some supermarkets, as well as Hispanic food stores, carry this meal made from dried corn cooked with a lime. It gives chili the taste of fresh tamales and adds a creamy texture. If you can't get masa, corn meal will do just fine.

Harry James, a great American musician, said, "Next to jazz music, there is nothing that lifts the spirit and strengthens the soul more than a good bowl of chili." I think this meatless version proves it.

VEGETARIAN CHILI

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 medium green bell pepper, cut in 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 1-3 jalapeno peppers, seeded and minced
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground ancho chile, or 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup coarsely chopped canned tomatoes, drained
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro leaves
- 2 tablespoons masa or corn meal

Freshly ground black pepper in a medium Dutch oven, heat the oil over

medium-high heat. Sauté the onion, bell pepper and garlic in the oil until

the onion is translucent, about 4 minutes.

Add the jalapeno pepper, cumin,



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ancho chile or chili powder, and oregano.

Stir until the spices are fragrant, about 1 minute. Take care not to let them burn.

Add the beans, chopped tomatoes, but 3 tablespoons of the vegetable broth, and the cilantro. Set the remaining vegetable broth aside. Bring the chili to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the masa or corn meal in a small bowl. Mix in the reserved vegetable broth, stirring to make a smooth mixture.

While stirring the chili, blend in the corn mixture, blending it in well. Mix in a generous amount of freshly ground black pepper. Continue simmering the chili 10 minutes longer. For the best flavor, let the chili sit 1-2 hours, reheat, and serve.

Each of the four servings contains 245 calories and 5 grams of fat.

Information and recipes written for the American Institute for Cancer by Dana Jacobi, author of "The Best of Clay Pot Cooking" and "The Natural Kitchen: SOY!"

Correction Notice

In our October 11 ad, we featured the PlayStation game **Duke Dukem: Time to Kill**, with a bonus phone card.

Due to delays in manufacturing, this title is not yet available. We are offering rainchecks for this title.

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