

Damn Good Chili

(My elaboration upon a Recipe attributed to Carroll Shelby)

2 lb	Beef	Cut into bite-sized pieces.
	Cooking Oil	
1	Large Onion	Chopped
1	Green Pepper	Chopped
2 cloves	Garlic	Chopped
2	Chiplote Chilies (optional)	Remove seed, Chopped
3 oz.	Wine	"Deglaze" the pan
14 oz.	Tomato Puree	
14 oz.	Water	
1 Tbsp.	Chili Power	
1/4 tsp.	Cayenne Pepper	
1/2 tsp.	Black Pepper	
1/2 tsp.	Oregano	
1 tsp.	Ground Cumin	
2 tsp.	Salt	To taste
1	Flour Tortilla (smallish)	Cut nto small pieces
2	16-oz cans Kidney Beans (optional)	

1. Brown meat, with oil to cover bottom of pan, in small batches, over high heat. Remove from pan. Discard excess grease.
2. Sauté onion, garlic, and peppers over medium heat for about 5 minutes. Add a bit of oil as needed.
3. Return meat to pan. Increase heat to high, Deglaze pan with the wine. Boil until wine is reduced by about half.
4. Add tomato puree and water.
5. Add remaining ingredients.
6. Cook covered, low heat. for 2-3 hours, until meat is tender.

Serve with rice or flour tortillas.

COMMENTS

This is a classic example of sauté-pan cooking:

- Brown the meat.
- Gently fry the aromatic vegetable in oils.
- Deglaze the pan.
- Add the sauce ingredients.
- Cook covered until done.

It's a process that builds up flavors as it progresses. You'll find this used in many different cuisines. A lot of really good food is prepared this way. This can be hazardous to your health: You may find yourself looking for extra bread to sop up the last of the sauce.

The Pan: You'll need a good sized sauté pan with a tight lid, mine's 12 inches, especially if you're adding beans. Otherwise, use a heavy bottomed cook pot, or do the frying in a fry pan, and transfer to a pot after deglazing the pan.

Browning the meat: You want to sear and caramelize the outside of the meat. A layer of brown "fond" should be accumulating on the bottom of the pan. If the meat is boiling in it's own juices, you've overloaded the pan. Be patient. You can use ground beef, but it's harder to brown, and like more expensive. The chili purists don't use ground meat.

Sautéing the vegetables: Get them just wet with oil. Cook slowly. You're performing an "oil extraction" of the aromatic chemicals in the vegetables.

Deglazing the pan: This step incorporates the browned-meat flavor from the "fond" in the pan, and the aromatic compounds in the oil into the sauce. In a pinch you can use a little water to do this, but the wine adds flavor, and the alcohol, which cook away, may help dissolve things.

Beans: Adding beans to the chili is controversial. They do stretch the product. That's good if it's being served in bowls to a bunch of people. Without the beans, this make an excellent taco filling. I generally serve beans and flavored rice as separate items.

Thickening the sauce: The tomatoes alone may prove sufficient. Of late, I've been adding the tortilla. You could also use a tablespoon or two of flour or corn starch, mixed in a little water to avoid lumps. It's a judgment call.

We've been using this recipe for about 40 years. It originally appeared in a Presto pressure cooker add that also touted "Carroll Shelby's Original Texas Brand Chili Kits." Surprisingly, hat product still exists, but they don't tell you what's in it. Shelby, a Texan, was a racecar driver and designer, see: Shelby Cobra. His Terlingua Ranch was known for epic chili events.

Please let me know if you have problems with this.

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