



Our Favorite Chili

Servings: 8

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Start to Finish Time: 3 hours 35 minutes

This is a hearty, meaty chili with just the right amount of heat. The sauce is rich in flavor and no item overpowers the dish. The meat is tender and flavorful.

1 pinch salt

1/2 pound pinto beans, dried (about 1 cup), rinsed and picked over

6 each Ancho chile peppers, dried (about 1 3/4 ounces), stems and seeds removed, and flesh torn into 1-inch pieces (see NOTES)

4 each árbol chiles, dried, stems removed, pods split, and seeds removed (see NOTES)

3 tablespoons cornmeal

2 teaspoons dried oregano

2 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons cocoa powder

2 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken broth

2 medium onions, cut into 3/4-inch pieces (about 2 cups)

3 each jalapeño chile pepper, stems and seeds removed and discarded, and flesh cut into 1/2-inch pieces

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

4 cloves garlic, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 4 teaspoons)

1 14.5 oz can tomatoes, diced, canned

2 teaspoons molasses

3 1/2 pounds blade steak, 3/4 inch thick, trimmed of gristle and fat and cut into 3/4-inch pieces (see NOTES)

1 12 fl. oz. btl beer, lager

Blade steak was easy to cut into pieces and cooked up tender, so it served as the base of our chili recipe. We avoided the grittiness of supermarket chili powders by making our own. Adding cornmeal to our chili powder thickened the chili. For secret ingredients, our chili recipe relies on lager, unsweetened cocoa, and molasses.

NOTE: Wear gloves when working with both dried and fresh chiles.

NOTE: SUBSTITUTE (dried chilis): Dried New Mexican or guajillo chiles make a good substitute for the anchos; each dried árbol may be substituted with 1/8 teaspoon cayenne. If you prefer not to work with any whole dried chiles, the



PREP PINTO BEANS:

Combine 3 tablespoons salt, 4 quarts water, and beans in large Dutch oven and bring to boil over high heat. Remove pot from heat, cover, and let stand 1 hour. Drain and rinse well.

PREP ANCHO CHILIES:

Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees.

Place ancho chiles in 12-inch skillet set over medium-high heat; toast, stirring frequently, until flesh is fragrant, 4 to 6 minutes, reducing heat if chiles begin to smoke.

Transfer to bowl of food processor and cool. Do not wash out skillet.

FOOD PROCESSOR:

Add árbol chiles, cornmeal, oregano, cumin, cocoa, and 1/2 teaspoon salt to food processor with toasted ancho chiles; process until finely ground, about 2 minutes.

With processor running, very slowly add 1/2 cup broth until smooth paste forms, about 45 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as necessary. Transfer paste to small bowl.

Place onions in now-empty processor bowl and pulse until roughly chopped, about four 1-second pulses.

Add jalapeños and pulse until consistency of chunky salsa, about four 1-second pulses, scraping down bowl as necessary.

DUTCH OVEN (Saute):

anchos and árbols can be replaced with 1/2 cup commercial chili powder and 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper, though the texture of the chili will be slightly compromised.

NOTE: SUBSTITUTE (blade steak): *A 4-pound chuck-eye roast, well trimmed of fat, can be substituted for the steak. Because much of the chili flavor is held in the fat of this dish, refrain from skimming fat from the surface.*

SERVING SUGGESTION: *Good choices for condiments include diced avocado, chopped red onion, chopped cilantro leaves, lime wedges, sour cream, and shredded Monterey Jack or cheddar cheese.*

MAKE AHEAD: *The chili can be made up to 3 days in advance.*

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, until moisture has evaporated and vegetables are softened, 7 to 9 minutes.

Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Add chili paste, tomatoes, and molasses; stir until chili paste is thoroughly combined. Add remaining 2 cups broth and drained beans; bring to boil, then reduce heat to simmer.

MEANWHILE IN SKILLET:

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering.

Pat beef dry with paper towels and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt. Add half of beef and cook until browned on all sides, about 10 minutes. Transfer meat to Dutch oven.

Add ½ bottle lager to skillet, scraping bottom of pan to loosen any browned bits, and bring to simmer. Transfer lager to Dutch oven.

Repeat with remaining tablespoon oil, steak, and lager. Once last addition of lager has been added to Dutch oven, stir to combine and return mixture to simmer.

COOK IN OVEN:

Cover pot and transfer to oven. Cook until meat and beans are fully tender, 1½ to 2 hours.

Let chili stand, uncovered, 10 minutes.

Stir well and season to taste with salt before serving.