

Robb's "Award Winning" Chili Recipe

A few years back, I won the first (and only) "Annual IS Dept Chili Cookoff" at work with this recipe. I used caribou and beef for the meat. I don't really measure anything, but this should be close enough -- it's not a specific science. One thing people always ask me is "what do you use as a base?" They get perplexed when I say "meat", but it's true. Instead of starting with tomato sauce and adding meat and spices like many people do, I start with meat, peppers, and onions, and only add as much sauce as I have to.

INGREDIENTS

2-4 lbs	ground meat - your preference I've used beef, venison, caribou, turkey, "meatloaf mix" (beef/veal/pork), and I've even added shredded squirrel meat.
1	Large green pepper
2-3	Jalapeno peppers
1	Habanero pepper
2-5	Other peppers as available. Depending on what's at the store. A few banana peppers, "cherry" peppers, anaheims, etc. Nice variety and makes each pot unique depending on what the store has.
2-4	Onions (depends on size)
2-4 spoonfuls	Garlic cloves (I like the ones already chopped in a jar)
"To Taste"	Black Pepper
"To Taste"	Ground Cumin
"To Taste"	Chili Powder
"To Taste"	Fennel Seeds
"To Taste"	Frank's Red Hot sauce
1 can (16 oz)	Tomato Sauce
1/2 can	Beer - anything you have, doesn't need to be fancy import or microbrew. I've used everything from Genessee, Michael Sheas, Sam Adams, Labatts, Rolling Rock, etc.
1-2 cubes	Beef boullion cubes
Other/Optional	Chili is a personal thing, and often a throw-together or experimental thing. Some people choose to add beans, mushrooms, corn, potatoes, and all kinds of other crap.

DIRECTIONS

1. Set aside a large crock pot (slow cooker) and a big-ass skillet. Get some spoons, all your ingredients, and an extra beer while you're at it.
2. Spice and fry the ground meat. I make a big pot of chili and use a lot of meat, so this takes several "batches". A skillet only holds so much meat. I usually add about a spoonful of fennel seeds to only one of these batches, to give a sweet Italian sausage type flavor. Use the chili powder, a bit of cumin, pepper, etc to each batch. For spices, go with what you like. I sometimes use garlic powder and onion powder as well.

One thing I found is you should spice the meat while it is cooking, instead of throwing unspiced meat into the pot and then trying to spice the whole thing. I've tried it both ways, and for some reason it makes a big difference. Add your salt, pepper, chili powder, cumin, and fennel seeds to the meat in the skillet while it cooks.

3. While the meat is cooking, chop up the peppers and onions. I like mine diced up pretty fine, but yo ucan leave it chunkier. If I am doing a big batch I use the food processor, but it's a PITA to clean. Sometimes I like to throw the peppers and onions in the skillet with the meat to soften up

and spice the meat, sometimes I throw right in the crock pot.

4. Dump all those chopped peppers and onions in the crock pot, set it to "low and slow".
5. Drain some fat off the meat, dump it in the crock pot.
6. Add the rest of the ingredients, the boullion cubes, garlic, and some more spices (mostly chili powder and cumin at this point), about a dozen squirts of Frank's Red Hot, the can of tomato sauce, and half a beer. You'll figure out what to do with the other half.
7. If you used the right proportion of meat/peppers to sauce/beer, it should still be fairly "dry", not all soupy and wet. The onions and peppers will release a lot of juices if you used fresh produce.
8. Give a good stir and let 'er rip.
9. Have beverages available and send the weak home before serving.
10. Serve with cheese and fresh chopped onion on top, with a side of tortilla chips or crusty bread.
11. Leftovers are great warmed up. Also makes great nachos and chili-cheese-dogs.