

CHILIS YES. TOMATOES NO.

You have this because you are a rare and special person. You know who you are and how this happened.

This chili is red because it is made not with tomatoes, but with chilis. Chilis are how chili became known as “a bowl of red.” Tomatoes are for spaghetti sauce. Leave them alone. You will be much happier. So will your chili and your chili eaters.

This chili is spicy, but not painfully so unless you are very Irish.

This chili contains beans. You may increase the beans if you wish, or eliminate them. In a classic chili irony, traditional chili is made only with beef and has beans. But in chili competition, there are no beans. In this recipe, I add pork because all-beef chili always seems a little rich. The pork also gives it a little more complexity. Competition chili is also made with “competition cut” meats. That small-cube style is in evidence here. Make the meat chunks bigger if you wish. I prefer the small size. It’s more work, but also a more enjoyable final product, IMHO.

A note on spiciness: no matter how hot this chili is when you make it, that heat level will diminish over time. Chili is always better the next day, after it has had time in the fridge. But on day two, it will not be as spicy.

Also note: this recipe is just one way of doing things. I have an award-winning chili recipe that I almost never make because it’s just too much work with too many ingredients. This chili is easier and equally enjoyable. It also freezes well. In a pinch, you can pull it out of the freezer, thaw it, and amaze your friends.

SUGGESTED INGREDIENTS

No tomatoes.

1 pound of beef chuck, cut into half-inch cubes

1 pound of pork loin, cut into half-inch cubes

One large onion, diced

One large red bell pepper, diced

4 garlic cloves, chopped

2 tablespoons cumin

1 tablespoon thyme

1 tablespoon coriander

Cayenne pepper

Black pepper

White pepper

Salt

Olive oil

Still no tomatoes

1 Serrano chili, chopped (use more if you wish)

1 Fresno chili, chopped (use more if you wish)

1 tbsp Better Than Bullion chicken

1 tbsp Better Than Bullion vegetable

1 can black beans

1 dried ancho chili

2 dried guajillo chilis

10 dried arbol chilis

12-ounce can of fizzy yellow beer

Still with no tomatoes.

SUGGESTED PREPARATION

Soak the dried chilis in a bowl with quart of hot water. An hour beforehand is good, if you can remember to do that. Otherwise, let them soak while you do the rest of the work.

Get a big pot. Pour in a healthy glug of olive oil and heat it. Sauté the onions until translucent. Add the garlic, sauté for a few more minutes. Add the bell pepper, Fresnos and serranos and continue sautéing.

Take the soaking chili peppers out of the bowl and reserve the liquid. Tear or chop the ancho and guajillo soaked peppers into pieces, discarding the stems. If the arbol chilis have stems, get rid of those as well. Don't discard the seeds. Dump all the chilis and the reserved water into the pot with the onions and peppers. Let it all simmer for a few minutes.

Take an immersion blender and pulse it in the pot until the mix of vegetables and water becomes like a thick, coarse sauce. Mix in the Better Than Bullion Chicken and Vegetable. (If you don't have an immersion blender, you should get one. It's the best small appliance ever. Otherwise, you can pulse the mixture in batches using a food processor or blender. Just don't overdo it.)

Add the cumin, thyme, coriander, and the black, red and white peppers. You'll notice there are no measurements for the various kinds of pepper. That's because I use them liberally and without measuring. Use as little restraint as you wish. Start with a teaspoon of cayenne and a half teaspoon of each of the others, if that makes you feel better.

While the chili concentrate is simmering, brown the meat in small batches in a skillet with salt and oil. Don't crowd the pan. You want to get the meat brown, which won't happen in a crowded pan. As each batch of meat gets browned, throw it into the chili pot and continue salting and browning until all the meat is in the pot and happy.

Now add the can of beans and the can of beer. Stir it up. It should all be very liquid. Let the pot simmer for an hour. During that time, it should reduce somewhat. I prefer my chili a little bit thick, some people like it a little souper. Taste the chili and adjust seasoning as you prefer.

Now, serve in small bowls and amaze your friends.

Say a prayer for the tomatoes.