

biloxi ranch-style chili

Not all chili needs to blow your head off with heat. In fact, we prefer the more subtle, fruitiness of ancho chillies to the searing heat of cayenne. But if you do like your chilli hot, add a teaspoon of cayenne or use a hotter fresh chilli, like habanero or scotch bonnet, in place of the green chilli.

This is best if made a day in advance.

Serves 4 to 6

6 Texas Ranch or Louisiana Cajun sausages
400 grams beef chuck or rump cut into strips
Couple splashes of bourbon (optional)
½ medium onion, chopped
2 fat cloves of garlic, minced
½ medium green bell pepper, chopped
1 fresh green chilli, minced
2-3 teaspoons ancho chilli powder
2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons dried oregano
1 small tin (400g) chopped tomatoes and their juice
2 tablespoons molasses
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
150 to 200 ml beef broth
½ cinnamon stick
1 400g tin of beans (optional) (kidney, butter, and cannellini beans all work well)
salt and pepper to taste
To garnish: wedge of lime, spring onions, coriander leaves

Preheat oven to 150°C / 300°F / Gas mark 2

Coat the bottom of a good oven-proof casserole with vegetable or sunflower oil and warm over medium-high heat. Brown the strips of beef. Set aside. Brown the sausages, remove and set aside. Leave three of the sausages whole, and cut three of them into 2 cm pieces.

At this point you may want to deglaze your pan. If so, pour in a good glug or two of bourbon and scrape the bottom of the pan, allowing the alcohol to burn off. Pour this over the reserved sausages and beef.

Add a bit more oil to the pan and saute the onions, green peppers, green chilli, and garlic. When soft, add the ancho chilli powder, ground cumin, and oregano. Stir for a minute or two. Return the meat and juices to the pan, and stir well. Add the tomatoes, molasses, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, beef broth and cinnamon stick. Stir well.

Put in the oven for two hours. Check at one hour and give a stir, adding more broth if the stew looks dry. If you are adding beans, stick them in about ½ hour before the end of the cooking time. When finished, break up the whole sausages into bite sized chunks with the back of a spoon. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Some people like to eat their chili with rice. We like it simply as it is, topped with a bit of sour cream or crème fraiche and perhaps some chopped spring onions stirred in.