

CHILI WITH TOMATILLOS & PORK

Fresh tomatillos are available from time to time throughout the year, and are well worth the trip to find them. Although canned tomatillos may be used (be sure to drain them well, then rinse under cold tap water before using), the fresh, as with all things produce, are far superior.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 1/4 cups dried pinto or black beans
- 3 pounds boneless pork shoulder, trimmed, then cut into 3/4-inch dice
- Salt to taste
- 3 to 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 3 fresh serrano chiles, minced (seeds and membrane included)
- 2 bay leaves
- 5 garlic cloves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried Mexican oregano leaves, crumbled
- 2 pounds tomatillos, halved or quartered
- 7 to 9 cups chicken broth

Garnishes

- Sour cream
- Minced cilantro leaves
- Chopped onion
- Warm thick corn tortillas or cornbread

INSTRUCTIONS: Soak the dried beans overnight in plenty of cool water.

Or, for a quick soak, place the beans in a large saucepan, add water to cover generously, cover the pan and bring to a rolling boil. Remove from the heat and set aside (covered) for 1 hour.

Drain.

Season the pork well with salt.

Heat the oil in a Dutch oven until it is shimmering.

Working in batches, add the pork to the pan and brown well on all sides. This will take some time — don't be tempted to crowd the pan or the meat won't brown.

When the pork has browned, remove it from the pan with a slotted spoon.

Repeat with the remaining pork. Remove the last batch of pork from the pan and set aside.

Add the onions to the pan and sauté for 5 minutes, stirring from time to time.

Add the chiles, bay leaves, garlic and oregano. Stir for 1 minute, then add the tomatillos and cook for a few minutes to soften, stirring occasionally.

Return the meat to the pan, along with the drained beans, then add enough broth to cover completely.

Bring to a steady simmer and cook, uncovered, for 1 1/2 hours.

Check occasionally to make sure there is still enough liquid to cover the stew, and that it continues to simmer evenly.

If the meat or beans are still not tender, or there is too much liquid, simmer for another 20 to 30 minutes.

Adjust seasonings.

Serve with sour cream, cilantro and chopped onions and either thick corn tortillas or cornbread.

Serves 12

Freezing note: Let stew cool completely, then portion into 5-cup batches (serving 4 each) and freeze.

Defrost overnight in the refrigerator. Reheat and serve with fresh garnishes.

PER SERVING: 345 calories, 32 g protein, 28 g carbohydrate, 11 g fat (3 g saturated), 74 mg cholesterol, 297 mg sodium, 8 g fiber.