

# Chili con Carne with Lettuce and Cheese

I used to have the chili con carne recipe from San Quentin Prison; the warden sent it to me in the 1960s when I worked at Howard Johnson's. Unfortunately, I lost it, but it was very similar to this coarsely textured chili of beef and red kidney beans. The amount and type of hot chile pepper—serrano, jalapeño, or the fiery habañoero—is up to you and your family's preferences. I have added a little cocoa powder to give it a bit of depth, similar to the Mexican sauce called mole.

Making this dish in a pressure cooker requires less than 1 hour. I often serve it over crunchy iceberg or romaine lettuce leaves, with a sprinkling of grated Monterey Jack, mozzarella, or cheddar, a little cilantro, and some sliced onion on top.

To cook the chili conventionally, put all the ingredients in a large, heavy saucepan, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and cook gently, covered, for 2 to 2 1/2 hours, or until the beans are tender.

## 4 Servings

- 3/4 pound beef stew meat, cut into 1/2-inch pieces, or coarsely ground beef
- 8 ounces dried red kidney beans (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 2 cups coarsely chopped onions
- 3 tablespoons coarsely chopped garlic
- 3/4 cup coarsely chopped scallions
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes in sauce
- 1–2 serrano or jalapeño chile peppers, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican
- 2 tablespoons good olive oil
- 2 teaspoons salt
- Freshly ground black pepper (optional)
- 3 cups cold water

## Garnishes

- 8 large iceberg or romaine lettuce leaves
- 2 cups grated Monterey Jack, mozzarella, or cheddar cheese
- 1 1/2 cups very finely sliced red onion, rinsed and drained
- About 1 1/2 cups loosely packed fresh cilantro leaves

Put all the ingredients except the garnishes in a 5- to 6-quart pressure cooker. Bring to a rolling boil, uncovered, over high heat. Mix well, secure the lid on the cooker, and cook

over high heat until the gauge indicates that the pressure inside is on high. Reduce the heat to very low and cook for 50 minutes. Decompress the cooker according to the manufacturer's instructions. Open the lid, stir the chili, and add more salt and pepper, if desired. Remove the bay leaves.

To serve, arrange the lettuce leaves to resemble cups on four plates and ladle the chili into the leaves. Sprinkle on some cheese, red onion, and cilantro. Serve and enjoy.