

Baked Pinto-Poblano Chili

Once cooked, dried pinto beans plump up with a soft, almost meaty texture no can could match. Making chili with dried beans may sound like more work, but it's not, especially when you just tuck it into the oven to cook for a couple hours, completely undisturbed.

If you don't have time to soak the beans overnight, place them in a pot and add water to cover. Bring to a boil, then let sit for an hour before draining, rinsing, and continuing as directed.

Also, you can substitute 3 cloves chopped garlic for the spring garlic, if you don't have access to the leek-like garlic shoots that farmers' market often sell in the spring.

TIME: 30 minutes active time

MAKES: 6 to 8 servings

1 pound dried pinto beans
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 bunch spring garlic (about 6 stalks, 1" in diameter at thickest point), chopped (white and green parts)
Salt and freshly ground pepper
3 poblano peppers, seeded and chopped
2 tablespoons ancho chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano (or 1 teaspoon dried oregano)
4 cups vegetable or chicken broth
1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 (15-ounce) can corn (or 1 1/2 cups fresh kernels, if available)
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
Cotija or crumbled goat cheese, for garnish

Place the beans in a large bowl and add water to cover by 2 inches. Let soak overnight, then rinse and drain.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Heat a large, heavy pot with a lid (such as a Dutch oven) on the stove over medium heat. Add the oil, then the onions and spring garlic. Season with salt and pepper, and cook and stir for 10 minutes, until soft. Add the poblanos, spices, and oregano, and cook and stir another minute or two. Add the beans, broth, tomato sauce, vinegar, and brown sugar, season again, and bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Cover the pot, and bake in the oven for 2 hours, undisturbed.

Stir in the corn and cilantro, and season to taste with additional salt and pepper, if necessary. Serve hot, sprinkled with cheese.