

# SMOKY PORK AND WHITE BEAN CHILI

Serves 6 to 8.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from recipe in a restaurant trade journal.

I like chili and this is one of the best, if not *the* best, chili I ever tasted. I typically make beef chili at least once each winter. This recipe will get the same treatment.



## Ingredients:

2 tablespoons of high-temperature oil for frying, such as peanut oil or safflower oil  
8 ounces (227g) thickly-sliced bacon, cut crosswise into ¼-inch (0.5cm) strips  
1 large (12 ounces/340g) onion, cut into ½-inch (1cm) dice  
2 tablespoons pure olive oil  
1½ pounds (680g) pork loin roast or shoulder, cut into ¾-inch (2cm) cubes  
2 tablespoons chili powder (any heat—mild to spicy hot—your preference)  
1 tablespoon smoked paprika  
2 pounds (900g) fresh Roma tomatoes or 2 cans (14½ ounces/411g each) canned fire-roasted tomatoes (see Notes at end), diced

1½ cups (355ml) water or chicken stock (homemade stock, if available)

1 pound (454g) dry cannellini beans, soaked overnight or 2 cans (15 ounces/425g each)

Salt

Optional: ½ cup (230g) sour cream for garnish

Optional: 2 scallions or green onions, thinly sliced, for garnish

## Directions:

If using dry beans, soak them in salted water (1 tablespoon salt) for 6 to 8 hours, or overnight. Drain and rinse before using, discarding the soak water. (See Notes at end.)

Bring water (enough to cover the beans) to a boil and reduce the heat to low. Simmer the beans 1½ to 2 hours. The water should barely move as it simmers. Agitating the beans in rapidly boiling water will break them up.

Heat your oven to 400°F (200°C) with a rack in the upper part of the oven. While the beans are cooking, cut the Roma tomatoes in half and arrange on a lined baking sheet. Bake until the tomatoes are tender and the skins begin to brown, 20 to 30 minutes. Set aside to cool. Remove and discard the skins (if desired), then chop the tomatoes, or purée in a food processor.

In a skillet over medium heat, sauté the chopped bacon 8 to 10 minutes until crisp, stirring occasionally. With a slotted spoon, transfer the cooked bacon to a plate lined with paper towels. Set aside.

Add the chopped onions to the bacon drippings and raise the heat to medium-high. Sauté 8 to 10 minutes until the onions are tender and slightly browned.

In a clean skillet, add the pork, chili powder, and paprika. Stir to coat the meat. Cook until the meat changes color but does not brown. Transfer the meat to a bowl and set aside. It does not need to be cooked thoroughly.

If using stock, use a ladle to remove most of the cooking water from the beans and set aside (retain if needed for more soup in the pot). Add the stock to the beans. Add the onions, about two thirds of the bacon (reserving the remainder for garnish), roasted tomatoes, and the pork. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer gently 35 to 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Adjust for salt before serving.

Dice the reserved bacon. Plate the chili, using sour cream, bacon, and/or green onions for garnish.

## STEP-BY-STEP

1



Soak the beans in salted water (1 tablespoon salt) 6 to 8 hours, or overnight. Most recipes say to soak the beans overnight because of the long soaking time. However, if you start the recipe early in the morning you could have it ready to serve by dinner time.

2



After the beans have soaked, drain and rinse. Then cook in simmering water for 1½ hours. The water should barely move as it simmers because agitating the beans in rapidly boiling water would break them up.

**3**

While the beans are cooking, you can do some prep work. Cut the pork into bite-sized pieces.

**4**

Cut the tomatoes in half and arrange on a baking sheet. Bake in a 400°F (200°C) oven until tender and beginning to brown, 20 to 30 minutes.

**5**

Cut the bacon, across the slices, cutting them into short strips.

6



Heat a skillet with a tablespoon or two of a high-smoke-point oil, such as peanut oil or safflower oil. Fry the bacon pieces until brown and crisp. Then use a slotted spoon or wire spider to transfer from the pan to a plate or bowl lined with paper towel. Allow to drain and cool.

7



Dice the onion into a medium-sized chop.

8



Sauté the onion in the bacon fat until tender and starting to brown.

9



To reduce the amount of bacon fat in my chili, I tilted the skillet, resting it on a metal spatula, to let the onions drain of fat before transferring them to a bowl to cool.

10



In a clean pan heat a tablespoon or two of oil. Add the pork pieces with the chili powder and paprika. Stir and turn to coat the meat evenly. Cook only until the meat changes color. It doesn't need to be cooked through or browned. Browning the pork—searing it—might seal the surface, preventing the meat from absorbing delicious flavors from the chili.

11



When the beans are cooked, some of the water can be removed from the pot before adding the chicken stock (if you are using). I ended up returning the cooking water to the pot because I wanted my chili to be more like a soup rather than a sauce.

**12**

These are my roasted tomatoes. I will use my immersion blender to purée them. I did not remove the skins. The blender puréed them into the tomatoes.

**13**

These are the puréed tomatoes, ready to add to the pot.

**14**

Add the onions, about two thirds of the bacon (retaining the smaller portion for garnish), the tomato purée, and the pork to the beans. Simmer gently for 35 to 40 minutes until the pork is tender. Meanwhile, the remaining bacon can be chopped into smaller pieces for a garnish, if preferred. You can also chop green onions for garnish.

**15**

Ladle plenty of chili into a bowl and garnish with a dollop of sour cream, the bacon, and/or green onion.

## Conclusion

This is one of the best flavored chili recipes I've tasted. I usually make Real Texas Chili once or twice each winter, but this chili might become the new favorite.

## Notes

Although the original recipe called for canned fire-roasted tomatoes, the local grocery store does not stock them. It might be a restaurant-supply item. I roasted my own fresh tomatoes.

Canned cannellini beans are usually stocked in the grocery stores. White Northerns would be a good substitute. Pinto beans are probably more traditional in chili.

Some bean aficionados insist that the soaking water be used in the final recipe. There are two reasons I avoid this:

1. Cooking beans in salted water can make the texture of the beans mealy. The reason for soaking beans in salted water is to tenderize the skins. (The sodium ions in salt displace some of the calcium and magnesium ions in the skin.) Refer to the March/April 2008 edition of *Cook's Illustrated* magazine for further information.
2. The soaking water sits at room temperature for many hours, allowing time for any bacteria present on the beans to multiply. Bringing the water to a boil will kill any bacteria, but it won't remove all toxins released into the water by the bacteria. The toxins can make people sick.

If you insist on using the soaking water in your soup, store the soaking beans in the refrigerator until needed to reduce bacteria formation.