

## Chili

### CHILI FOR 20

6 pounds coarse ground lean chili meat  
3 onions, chopped  
4-6 cloves garlic  
3 tablespoons oil  
32 ounces canned tomatoes  
24 ounces tomato sauce  
3 teaspoons cumin  
2 teaspoons paprika  
5 tablespoons chili powder  
1-2 tablespoons ground red chili (optional)  
1 square Bakers chocolate or 1 T cocoa  
1 can beer (12 ounces)  
1 tablespoon sugar  
water as needed  
beans

### COOKING ADVENTURES

If you come from Texas, you are a champion chili cook. Right? Not at all. I had never cooked chili at all until I moved from Texas to Virginia. Immediately, I learned that I was considered an expert. With my Texas twang to betray me, nearly everyone knew my origin. So, I researched chili and came up with a recipe that I could claim without apology. In the research I learned that many true Texas cooks, my older son George among them, were adamant that there should be no tomatoes or beans in chili. George preferred venison cut into small cubes for his meat. His tomato-less/bean-less chili, which he served the last time we were in Texas, was excellent and could be classified in the one- to two-"alarm" category. When I recently looked for his recipe, I could not find it, so I'm not able to vouch for every ingredient, but the spices included cumin, lots of chili powder, and red pepper. The liquid came, as I recall, from beer.



I cannot find the recipe I finally used when I had a chili dinner for a dozen friends, but I remember that I went easy on the spices out of consideration for their mid-Atlantic palates. I served the dish in heavy brown crockery bowls and had what would have been called seven-boy curry if it had been curry. The side dishes included chopped onions, shredded cheddar, shredded lettuce, rice, lots of

crisp tortillas, and a small dish of chopped jalapeno peppers, the last of which survived the meal almost untouched. Otherwise, the meal was a success on a cold blustery winter night, a gift from the weather that I sincerely appreciated. Later, we received hints from guests that they would like a return engagement.

It's been several years since I thought of making chili, although I've served several unsatisfactory canned varieties to members of the family. Last Sunday, however, I was in a meeting planning for an annual church luncheon at the end of the month. In past years we've apparently worn out the welcome of Brunswick stew, judging by the steadily declining numbers who partake. As we were casting about for something different and feasible for a crowd, someone suggested chili. Immediately most of the committee looked at me when one traitor announced that I was an expert, having come from Texas. I don't know what her basis was; she's never had chili at my house. But there I was, a declared expert. So, I've spent a good bit of time this week trying to find my old recipe or something which would be a reasonable substitute for it. The best I've come across is for twenty, but it's so generous on the meat that we'll go bankrupt if we extrapolate to one hundred fifty, our target attendance. We'll just have to put in a few more beans, I guess. We'll have a dish of chopped hot peppers for the adventurers, a small pot of meat-less chili for the vegetarians, and a large jar of peanut butter for the weak at heart. If you don't see me in February, you'll know that this adopted Virginian has been sent back to Texas.



An old commercial oft-quoted in Minton households.