

Zuñi Stew (serves 40)

Though the ingredients are ordinary, this bean and summer vegetable stew has an intricate balance of flavors. The inspiration for **it** came from a book on Pueblo Indian cookery. It goes well with the Potato Gordas, but if made a little on the dry side, **it** can be eaten in tortillas with Salsa Picante.

- 6 1/4 cups pinto beans, soaked overnight and drained
- 2 teaspoon salt
- 5 bay leaves
- 5 teaspoon dried oregano
- 5 pound tomatoes, fresh or canned, peeled, seeded, and chopped; juice reserved
- 4 ancho chilies
- 5 pound mixed summer squash
- 15 ears corn (about 3 cups kernels)
- 5 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 10 tablespoons corn or vegetable oil
- 8 yellow onions, cut into 1/4 -inch squares
- 10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 10 tablespoons red chili powder, or more, to taste –
- 32 ounces green beans, cut into 1-inch lengths
- 20 ounces jack or muenster cheese, grated
- 1 bunch cilantro leaves, roughly chopped
Fl/whole cilantro leaves, for garnish

Cook the pre-soaked beans for about 1 ½ to 2 hours in plenty of water with the salt, bay leaf; and oregano. Remove them from the heat when the beans are soft but not mushy, as they will continue to cook in the stew. Drain the beans, and save the broth.

Prepare the tomatoes, or use puréed charcoal-grilled tomatoes. Open the chili pods and remove the seeds and veins; then cut the chilies into narrow strips. Cut the squash into large pieces; shave the kernels from the corn. Grind the cumin and the coriander seeds into a powder in a spice mill or with a mortar and pestle.

Heat the oil in a large skillet, and sauté the onions over high heat for 1 to 2 minutes. Lower the heat, add the garlic, chili powder, cumin, and coriander, and stir everything together. Add a little bean broth, so that the chili doesn't scorch or burn. Cook until the onions have begun to soften, about 4 minutes, then add the tomatoes and stew for minutes. Stir in the squash, corn, green beans, and chili strips along with the cooked beans and enough broth to make a fairly wet stew. Cook slowly until the vegetables are done, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Taste the stew and adjust the seasoning. Stir in the cheese and chopped cilantro, and garnish with whole leaves of cilantro.