



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Chunky Chicken Chili

For a lot of us, building a meal consists of a starch, a vegetable and a meat. Most have learned from an early age that starches provide the carbohydrates needed to make energy; vegetables assure we get lots of vitamins and minerals, and meats provide the protein for strong muscles. For the most part, this is an accurate and simple way to view how to get what our bodies need to function. There are multiple and exciting ways to do so. One key option is adding more legumes to our diet.

Although animal meats, fish and shellfish, and eggs are great sources of protein, these foods also add saturated fat into the diet. Aiming to meet protein needs with mostly animal products may cause the intake of saturated fat to exceed the recommended level of less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat per day. In addition, animal proteins tend to be the most expensive items in our diets.

Legumes are very economical sources of protein. In fact, one cup of cooked legumes provides between 15-20 grams (or more) of protein and zero saturated fat for roughly 220-300 calories. Along with being a good source of protein, legumes also provide complex carbohydrates and are loaded in vitamins and minerals. In a sense, legumes are a good source of all the key nutrients mentioned in the first paragraph. Legumes also provide fiber to help one feel full and ward off hunger longer and have been shown to be highly beneficial to heart health. Perhaps this is why cultures that consume legumes as the main staple in their diets experience substantially lower rates of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

The only issue is that legumes are not considered a complete protein, which means they do not contain all the essential amino acids needed to build protein. This is easy to fix because legumes and grains are considered complimentary proteins, meaning that when consumed together or at least on the same day, they will form a complete protein. For many, canned legumes, rice, and pasta are pantry staples so making a complete protein doesn't have to be complicated, a burden or even require refrigeration prior to preparing!

A great strategy to assist with keeping your calories in balance, increasing your fiber intake while lowering your saturated fat intake is to consider ways to replace some of the higher fat animal protein in your diet with legumes. For example when making chili or casseroles, consider decreasing the quantity of ground meat and increasing or substituting some legumes. Consider topping your salad with legumes instead of meat. Aim to have legumes as part of your dinner or lunch at least 3 times a week.

Examples of legumes include:

- Split peas
- Cannellini beans
- Kidney beans
- Navy Beans
- Soybeans
- Chickpeas
- Black Beans
- Red, green or brown lentils

The recipe featured for this dietitian approved meal shows that there is more than one way to make chili! Start with this recipe and experiment in the future by changing the type of legumes, broths, meats, and vegetables, using the technique described to cook your creation. The combinations are endless. Aim to choose low-sodium and no added sugar canned products most of the time.



Ingredients: 6 servings

- 1½ cups frozen lima beans
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 28-30 oz. stewed tomatoes
- 28-30 oz. kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 14 oz. chicken broth
- 14 oz. corn, undrained
- 2 tbsp. chili powder
- 2 tsp. garlic, minced
- 2 cups biscuit mix
- ⅔ cups skim milk

Directions:

1. Microwave the covered, frozen lima beans with ½ cup of water for 8-10 minutes.
2. Cut the boneless, skinless chicken breast into bite-sized chunks. In a very large sauce pan, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat and then add chicken. Stir to brown the chicken.
3. After about 2 minutes, add the stewed tomatoes, kidney beans, chicken broth, corn (undrained), and the microwaved lima beans.
4. Bring this mixture to a mild boil and add chili powder, minced garlic. Simmer for an additional 10 minutes on medium heat. Stir occasionally.
5. While the chili is simmering, mix 2 cups of biscuit mix with skim milk in a medium bowl.
6. Turn the chili back up to medium-high heat. To make the dumplings, once the chili begins to boil, quickly drop the wet biscuit mixture by small spoonfuls into the boiling chili. Reduce the heat to medium and cook covered for an additional 10 minutes (or until the dumplings look fluffy and are cooked through).
7. Serve ⅓ of the chili in a bowl alongside a piece of fresh fruit.

Notes

This chili tastes even better the next day, so carry a serving to the office for lunch. Freeze the remaining chili in single-sized portions for a quick go-to lunch or freeze all of the remaining chili for a quick go-to meal later in the month.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.