

Chorizo stew over polenta

A cozy meal to bat away the January blues

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

I found a package of homemade chorizo in the back of the freezer.

I prefer to make my own sausage — no preservatives, a nod to better health, and there it was.

The pork sausage was permeated with the pungent spices of clove and cinnamon and I thought it wouldn't marry well in a preparation like a bolognese sauce.

Chorizo is a very flavorful sausage. I use a Kitchen Aid attachment and make sausage frequently from pork shoulder, cut into small chunks, refrigerated until very cold and then fed through the food tube and into boudin casings. One can freeze the sausage for up to three months.

Outside, winter poured home heavy rain-water, bullied by an indomitable sou'wester — a fine day to cook inside. But what to

concoct with this pungent sausage? I had a hunkering for polenta and wished for a sauce or topping that would chase away the malaise of Pacific storms.

Here is what I invented.

Let's call it David's Chase away January Blues Chorizo Stew.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pound chorizo
- 1 tablespoon crushed garlic
- One whole, large onion, diced
- One sweet pepper, preferably yellow or orange for color. Add a second and the dish almost resembles a tapenade.
- 2 cups mushrooms, diced.
- Two stalks celery, diced
- Two, 15 oz. cans diced tomatoes and their juice
- 3 oz. tomato paste
- 2 cups homemade chicken stock
- Splash of red wine
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 tablespoons mushroom dust
- 2 cups pitted Kalamata (or black) olives, halved

- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar to sharpen the taste
- Salt to taste
- Butter, Parmesan cheese and olive oil
- 2 cup polenta and eight cups of water or chicken stock

Preparation:

Sauté the ground sausage in olive oil. Break the meat up into small chunks. When browned, add the onions and garlic. Cook until the vegetables are translucent. Marry in the celery, mushrooms and peppers, in that order. Add the tomatoes and juice. Pour in the red wine, vinegar and chicken stock. Sprinkle on the chili powder and mushroom dust. Stir and simmer for an hour and then add the olives. Thicken with enough tomato paste to create a smooth silky texture. Salt. Adjust the seasonings with a hot chili sauce (optional). Some like it hot. Some don't.

Meanwhile, boil 8 cups of salted water and evenly stir in the polenta. Continue to stir until the cornmeal is thick and smooth. Add a touch of butter and some grated Parmesan cheese.



David Campiche

A one bowl meal featuring chorizo stew over polenta.

Ladle the polenta into a bowl and top with this rich sauce. I chose to grate Parmesan cheese over the sauce and served the preparation in a simple ceramic bowl, a one-bowl dinner. I came back for seconds. You will too.

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