

FOOD & DINING

Potpie Perfect for Warding Off Winter Weather



With the arrival of winter weather comes the embrace of warm foods that stick to your ribs. If the weather outside is frightful, the following recipe for “Black Bean Chili Potpie With Onion & Pepper Corn Bread Topping” from Elinor Klivans’ “Potpies” (Chronicle Books) is sure to cozy things up at the dinner table.

Black Bean Chili Potpie With Onion & Pepper Corn Bread Topping
Makes 8 servings

Filling

- 1 1/4 cups dried black beans
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons chili powder, plus 1 tablespoon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 ancho chile, dried
- 1 14.5 ounce can tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cups coarsely chopped onions
- 1 large green bell pepper, seeded, deveined and finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Topping

- 1/2 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup yellow cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup buttermilk
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon corn oil
- Reserved 1/2 cup cooked vegetables from filling above

To make the filling:

1. Wash the beans in a strainer and check for

any debris or small pebbles. Put the beans in a large bowl, cover them with water, and let them soak overnight. Or, put the beans in a medium saucepan, cover them with water, and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat and let the beans sit for one hour. Drain the beans. Put the soaked beans in a large saucepan with water to cover them by about 2 inches. Add the bay leaf, 1 teaspoon of the oregano, the 2 teaspoons chili powder, the cumin, and ancho chile. Cover and cook for 30 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juice and cook about 45 more minutes, or until the beans are tender. Taste a bean to check that they are done.

2. Have ready a baking dish with an 8-cup capacity. In a medium skillet, heat the oil over medium heat for 1 minute. Add the onions and cook until softened, stirring often, about 5 minutes. Add the bell pepper and garlic and continue cooking until the pepper is soft, about 8 minutes. Remove 1/2 cup of the vegetables and reserve them to add to the topping later. Stir the remaining 1 tablespoon chili powder and 1/2 teaspoon oregano into the vegetables in the skillet. Stir the vegetables into the beans. Remove the ancho chile and bay leaf and discard them. Remove 1 cup of the beans, put it in a food processor and puree. Return the puree to the beans and stir them together. This thickens the chili. Season with salt and pepper. Pour the chili into the baking dish and set aside.
3. Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 375 F.

To prepare the topping:

1. Into a large bowl, sift the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In a medium bowl, stir the buttermilk, egg, oil, and reserved cooked vegetables together to combine them. Pour the buttermilk mixture into the dry ingredients and stir slowly with a large spoon for about 20 strokes just to combine the ingredients. There will be a few small lumps. This is fine. Carefully spoon the batter over the chili in the baking dish.
2. Bake until the topping is golden brown and firm, about 35 minutes. Use a large spoon to scoop out servings of topping and filling.

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