

Old Hollywood Chili

Right off the bat let's clear something up! This old cook does not think Chili contains beans of any shape color or size. Chile is meat and peppers of some variety or other. How-some-ever, Chili is what Chasens called this famous dish, and out of respect for the departed....

A few years ago one of the truly classic restaurants in Hollywood closed it's doors. It was the original CNBC (see and be seen) joints in that town that thrives on exposure—being seen—in more ways than one. But Chasen's was a true classic, and in a classic American sense, in that it served chili and BBQ, if only BBQ ribs. I ate there a few times when I was young and working hard in the real estate business, selling farms and ranches in California's great central valley—I pitched deals to Janet Leigh's husband (she's gone now, but I was pleased to meet her a couple of times, a gracious, gracious lady), to June Lockhart, to Andy Williams's dad (who handled his real estate), to Loren Green, to Chuck Connors, several times to Jack Palance, and others. A number of high earning Hollywood types were investing in farms and ranches because of the tax shelter for most, and because of a love of the land for a few.

Chasen's was internationally known for it's chili, and getting the recipe was about as tough as breaking into Fort Knox. Sometimes, as I learned many years ago, it's good to have friends in high places...and as good or better to have friends in low places. If I was told the truth this is, or is very close to, the original recipe, even if not, it's a great one....

- 1 lb dry pinto beans
- 1 lb fairly lean chuck roast
- ½ lb pork shoulder
- ½ green bell pepper diced
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ¼ cup chopped parsley or 1 tblsp dry parsley
- 1 16 oz can diced tomatoes in juice
- 1 large clove garlic diced fine
- 1 tblsp olive oil
- 1 tblsp butter
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 tblsp Gebhardt chili powder (on a good brand of chili powder)

Chop the meat into ½ inch cubes. In a Dutch oven or heavy pot of adequate size, cover the beans with water and bring to a boil for five minutes, remove from heat and let stand, covered, for at least an hour. Drain and rinse, sit aside. Add oil to pot and sauté bell pepper and onion, then cook on simmer, stirring, until soft. Add garlic and parsley. Add tomatoes. Add beans. Melt the butter in a skillet and brown meat. Drain and add to beans and other ingredients. Add all other ingredients and bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for at least one hour. If fat is apparent on the surface, skim and remove, then serve.

Note: Only one of the great old Hollywood restaurants is still open (but don't miss the nearby Pacific Dining Car in L.A.), Musso and Franks, and it's a great place to visit, still with

wonderful food. They are one of the few places serving a “baseball” piece of beef liver, and it’s great...if you love liver and I do. Of course, there’s a whole new batch of fabulous restaurants in Hollywierd.