

Sliders score at Super Bowl parties

Spilling the beans about true Texas chili

Meat-only prevails in the Lone Star State, but the choice is up to you

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When you think about the great regional traditions of America, a few foods come to mind, including, surely, some from Green Bay (cheese?) and Pittsburgh (Heinz ketchup?).

But I'm originally from Texas. And because Dallas is hosting the Super Bowl — on Sunday, when the Green Bay Packers play the Pittsburgh Steelers — my mind is on Texan regional traditions. And what's a more traditional Super Bowl party dish than chili? It's a one-pot dish that you can keep simmering all day — plus, it feeds a whole bunch of people. And we're talking Texas chili — so you don't use beans. So chili it is. Easy.

Except, I found, getting a recipe for Texas chili — no beans — is not nearly so easy.

I was planning on reaching for my dad's recipe, from a collection he'd printed out from a vintage-1990 computer and bound with a plastic book-report-style cover and given to me and my sister the Christmas before he died. He liked the chili made popular by Wick Fowler — a newspaper columnist from Austin who took top prize in the Terlingua International Chili Championship in 1970. (It's a big one in Texas, held each year near Big Bend, and Fowler later marketed a grocery store kit, called Wick Fowler's Two-Alarm Chili.)

But then I thought, it's been a while — do people still use Wick Fowler's recipe? I took to the forum where I knew I could find the biggest number of Texans I trust in one spot: Facebook.

"So Texans," I wrote. "I'm thinking about writing a quick story about Texas chili ahead of the Super Bowl in Dallas. I know, NO BEANS. What else? Do people still do the Wick Fowler thing?"

Quick story, my foot. The conversation turned into 20-plus comments, with my mother insisting "NO BEANS" (yes, she used all caps) and my brother (born in Texas but now living in North Carolina) saying "Chili without beans is just meat stew."

One friend, originally from El Paso, suggested that a lot of Texans like their chili with venison. Another, who grew up in Houston, had

Larry Crowe/The Associated Press

Assemble a buffet of make-it-yourself sliders for your Super Bowl party, so you can get out of the kitchen and enjoy the game.

Alison Ladman | For The Associated Press

Super Bowl party food is all about big, comfy flavor — and ease. Because on the day of the big game, you want to spend your time in front of the tube, not the stove.

Sliders are great because they can be served as appetizers or entrees. And assembling a buffet of make-it-yourself sliders allows your guests to tailor the sandwiches to their liking.

Start with a basic roll that goes well with everything. Dinner rolls are a good size and French rolls are perfect for just about any sandwich. If you don't find what you want in the bread aisle, try the bakery section or the freezer aisle; there will be several options available. You could also cut down a baguette into slider-sized pieces.

We've listed several fillings for slider sandwiches. These

are all hot fillings, so consider rounding out the selection with some deli meats such as salami, turkey breast and ham, as well as a selection of cheeses and condiments. Simply set all the fillings out on the table and let your guests assemble and eat at will.

SEE SLIDERS, 2B

Mom shows how to eat on a budget

Smart shopping and meal-planning can keep dinner cost to about \$5

Joe Bonwich
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Erin Chase has budget meals down to a science.

The wife and mother from Dayton, Ohio, began making \$5 meals for her family of four during the depths of the economic downturn.

Her strategies and recipes turned into a website, 5dollarinnings.com; a dinner cookbook published in 2009; and a recently released follow-up, "The \$5 Dinner Mom Breakfast and Lunch Cookbook," (St. Martin's Griffin, \$14.99). Along the way, the family of four turned into a family of five.

Getting full-meal prices down to \$5 takes planning, time and a lot of discipline. Chase says that all of her calculated meal prices are based on purchases she made at supermarkets in Dayton, and many of the in-

redient prices are quite low because she found ways to combine coupons with sales.

She adds that even if you don't have the time or organizational skills to shop, coupon and meal-plan strategically, you can still achieve significant savings by putting an emphasis on the strategies that appeal to you most.

"If you don't like to coupon, then aggressively meal-plan," she says.

SEE CHEAP 2B



Christian Gooden/St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Pork, potatoes and broccoli serve as a healthy meal for under \$10.

Looking for the best

Metromix is seeking nominations for the "best of" in nightlife and entertainment categories in the Hudson Valley, including best burger, best pizza, best sushi, best margarita, best festival, best dive bar and many, many more. To add your nominees, which can only be done online and by Friday, go to:

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CHILI: Regional recipes include beans, beef and pork

CONTINUED FROM 1B

this comment: "No beans? :-(" Someone else, from Austin, said to use equal parts ground beef and chopped brisket and to totally forget about beans.

Who knew there'd be such a debate — from Texans, no less! I thought I'd been living in New York too long. So I called someone else who's also been living in New York a long time — but has done a much better job of keeping up with Texan food culture than I: Lisa Fain. She writes the Homesick Texan blog and is the author of the forthcoming "Homesick Texan" cookbook, due out in September.

I asked her whether the no-beans thing was because Texas is such a big cattle-raising region. She shocked me with her answer: "The thing about no beans goes back to the original source of where they think Texas chili came from: The Canary Islands."

It evolved from immigrants from the Canary Islands? That's what Fain says — and, to be fair, lots of other people do, too. The Canary Islanders settled in San Antonio, and they did not make chili, but rather a beef stew.

"From there Texas chili evolved," Fain told me. "In the chuck wagon days, they would make chili bricks — dehydrated." No beans. And then there were the San Antonio chili queens — yes, that is what they were really called — who would sell chili in the square in San Antonio. No. No beans.

Fain's family doesn't use beans. She grew up in Houston, and remembers when a woman from Idaho brought chili to a function at church — with beans. The horror! "Something was ingrained in me that chili with beans was Yankee chili," she said. But then she tasted it. "And I was like, 'Oh, this isn't so bad!'"

These days, when Fain serves chili, she'll put out a pot of beans, "in case."

Even Renee Moore, the president of the board of directors of the Chili Appreciation Society International, which runs the Terlingua International Chili Championship, says this of beans: "Most folks I know do put them in their home recipes."

But, she says, "in competition chili, we are judging meat and gravy; this does not include beans. In fact, there's an old saying 'If you know chili, you know chili has no beans.'"

Tell that to my cousins. They grew up in California, but had plenty of Texas family traditions. Their dad — my great uncle — used to make chili for Christmas Eve supper, and it includes beans and (gasp!) pork.

"It may not be an original Texas recipe," says my cousin Kay Schruder. "But he was a Texan at heart."

Beans, no beans. Beef, no beef. Pork? Well, if you're one of the many fans who wish the Jets were playing this weekend, I've got a great recipe that uses pork: Green Chili. (Get it? Gang Green?) It's originally from Denver.

"There are so many chili traditions," says Fain, the Homesick Texan. "If you come from Cincinnati — you're probably going to put beans in it, and that's fine — that's your style of chili."

No — you don't have to be a Texan at heart to make chili for the Super Bowl, even if it's hosted in Dallas. But it doesn't hurt.

Beans or no beans? That's up to you.

Wick Fowler's Two-Alarm Chili

You can use half the amount of cayenne pepper for One-Alarm chili or omit it for False Alarm Chili.

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 1/4 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 8 tablespoons Gebhardt's chili powder (or substitute another brand)
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 (8-ounce can) tomato sauce
- 2 (8-ounce cans) water
- 1 1/2 tablespoons dried onion
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 4 teaspoons masa harina mixed with water to form a smooth paste

Brown meat. Add cayenne, chili powder, cumin, tomato sauce, water, onion, paprika and salt. Cook for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Skim fat off the top. Add masa harina paste. Stir and cook 1/2 hour more.

Serves 4 to 6.

Vegetarian Chili

Despite my mother's firm belief that Texas chili has no beans, she makes a great version of all-bean chili, perfect for the vegetarians at your party.

- 1 green pepper
- 1 red pepper
- 1 onion
- 2 cans black beans
- 2 cans pinto beans
- 1 can whole tomatoes
- 1 small package frozen white corn
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cumin
- Fresh cilantro, chopped

Dice peppers and onions and saute in oil until sweated, about 5 minutes. Add cumin and cilantro and stir. Drain beans and add to the pot. Add tomatoes and corn. Simmer for about 20 minutes. Taste for spices (you may need more!). Serves about 8.

Denver Green Chili

Adapted from Kris Burns of Nyack, who served it with a tip of the hat to Denver at a book club discussion of "On the Road" by Jack Kerouac. Jets fans might like it because it's "Gang Green."

- 1 1/2 pounds tomatillos
 - 2 poblano chiles
 - 2 jalapeno chiles
 - 4 cups chicken stock
 - 2 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil
 - 6-8 pound pork shoulder, cut into 1-2 inch cubes (you can ask your butcher to do this)
 - 1 yellow onion, diced
 - 3 cloves garlic
 - 1 tablespoon flour
 - 2 teaspoons cumin
 - 1 teaspoon oregano
 - 2 tablespoons cilantro
 - Salt
 - Pepper
- Preheat broiler to 400.

Roast the tomatillos and chiles on a sheet pan on the top rack, turning occasionally, until skin has blackened. Peel the tomatillos and peel, seed and stem the chilies and place everything in a blender. Add stock and puree until smooth. Set aside.

In a Dutch oven or large stock pot over medium high heat, add cooking oil and brown pork in batches and set aside.

Saute onions in the same pan and add garlic after a few minutes. Sprinkle in flour and cumin and stir.

Add tomatillo-stock mixture to the onions. Add pork and oregano and cook on low heat for two hours.

Taste for salt and pepper. Add cilantro.

Serve with rice, beans and tortillas. Serves 8 to 12.

Davis Family Christmas Chili

Marvin Davis, my great-uncle, started making this for his family's Christmas Eve dinner sometime in the early 1970s, says his daughter, Kay Schruder. Leftovers were planned for Christmas breakfast and served over scrambled eggs.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 pound pork stew meat
- 1/2 pound beef stew meat
- 1 pound ground beef
- 3 strips bacon, cut into chunks
- 1 onion
- 1 green pepper
- 2-3 cloves garlic, put through a press
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 cloves

- Ground pepper (to taste)
- Salt (to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 2 to 3 dried red chili peppers
- 2-3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 12 ounces beer
- 1 can chicken broth
- 2 cans diced tomatoes
- 1 to 2 cans chili beans (red beans in a mildly spicy sauce)
- Monterrey Jack cheese
- 1 lime

Heat vegetable oil medium high heat in a large pot until shimmering. Sear pork, beef stew and ground beef in batches. Add bacon render fat. Saute onion, green pepper and garlic in bacon fat. Add drained meat back to the pan, and add bay leaves, cloves, salt, pepper, oregano, chili peppers, brown sugar and molasses. Stir, then add beer, broth and tomatoes.

Simmer 1-2 hours. Add beans in last 15 minutes. Add grated cheese and lime just before serving. Serves 8 to 12.

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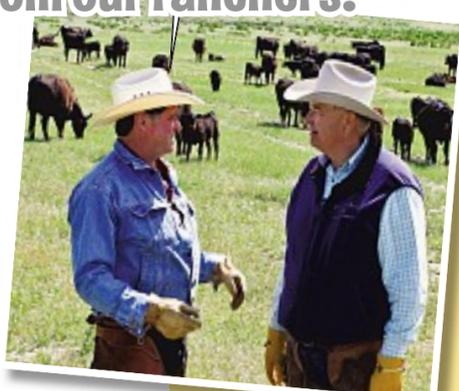
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