



CHASEN'S FAMOUS CHILI

Chasen's was the place to be and be seen from its opening in 1936 until well into the mid 90's when a new generation of Hollywood and Los Angeles luminaries were tempted away by newer cuisine that was being offered in places like Spago. But almost until its end it was a hangout for much of Hollywood's old guard including Ronald and Nancy Reagan. Chasen's was famous for many things not the least of which was their wonderful Chili.

As legend has it Dave Chasen would come into the restaurant on Sunday mornings and take to the kitchen. He thought that the Chili was best when it had been frozen so each Sunday Dave would make enough Chili to last the restaurant for the coming week.

The most famous story surrounding Chasen's Chili has to do with Elizabeth Taylor who, while in Rome filming Cleopatra in 1962 sent the following cablegram to Dave Chasen: "*The chili is so good. All gone now. Please send me ten quarts of your wonderful chili in dry ice to 448 Via Appia pignatelli. - Love and kisses, Elizabeth Taylor.*"

* Tip: If you can't find Gebhardt's chili powder buy another one that you like but add some ground clove. That, I think, was Gebhardt's secret ingredient (at least one of them).

Here's where you can buy Gebhardt's online: Amazon.com.

Ingredients:

1/2 pound dry pinto beans
Water
1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes in juice
1 large green bell pepper, chopped
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
3 cups onions, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1/2 cup parsley, chopped
1/2 cup butter
2 pounds beef chuck, coarsely chopped*
1 pound pork shoulder, coarsely chopped*
1/3 cup Gebhardt's chili powder
1 tablespoon salt
1 1/2 teaspoons pepper
1 1/2 teaspoons Farmer Brothers ground cumin**

Directions:

Chasens used beef chuck, center cut, trimmed completely of fat but any good cut of beef will do. I like to use sirloin sometimes. But the thing is to put a lot of love into the chili by hand trimming the meat and cutting it into one-quarter inch cubes. Small cubes of meat are much better than ground meat.

Rinse the beans, picking out debris. Place beans in a Dutch oven with water to cover. Boil for two minutes. Remove from heat. Cover and let stand one hour. Drain off liquid.

Rinse beans again. Add enough fresh water to cover beans. Bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer covered, for one hour or until tender.

Stir in tomatoes and their juice. Simmer five minutes. In a large skillet, saute bell pepper in oil for five minutes. Add onion and cook until tender, stirring frequently. Stir in the garlic and parsley. Add mixture to bean mixture. Using the same skillet, melt the butter and saute beef and pork chuck until browned. Drain. Add to bean mixture along with the chili powder, salt, pepper and cumin.

Bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer, covered, for one hour. Uncover and cook 30 minutes more or to desired consistency. Chili shouldn't be too thick - it should be somewhat liquid but not runny like soup. Skim of excess fat and serve.

NOTE: You can freeze this chili for several months. When reheating refrigerated leftover or frozen chili, add a few tablespoons of water to regain the proper consistency.

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