

Tuesday-Thursday Chili with Mushrooms

Serves 6-8 | 10 minutes prep + 40 minutes cook time

Does anyone think back on their high school years to fondly remember the food in the cafeteria? Wellspent Market founder Jim Dixon claims he can't recall much about those long ago days, but he's never forgotten eating chili every week with a handful of friends. Here's the story.

In the late 1960s it seemed like everyone in Eugene was a hippy. We protested the war in Vietnam, tripped with the Grateful Dead, and railed against the establishment. My long haired friends and I were too cool for the usual high school student organizations, so we started our own: the Tuesday-Thursday Chili Club.

Four of us formed the club because the cafeteria served chili every Tuesday and Thursday. We were a bunch of smart-asses and mostly talked about avoiding the draft so we didn't get sent to Vietnam. We also discussed the most recent episode of Star Trek, by then in reruns so we could see it every day.

While we all skipped our 50 year reunion, the original members got together recently. Like a bunch of old guys anywhere, we tried to remember those glory days with limited success. But we did eat chili.

The cafeteria chili - ground beef, beans, tomato sauce, and vague hint of spice - wasn't worth replicating, but I wanted something close.

1 lb mushrooms, coarsely chopped

½ teaspoon RGF fine sea salt + more to taste

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon Burlap & Barrel purple stripe garlic

1 teaspoon Burlap & Barrel wild mountain cumin seeds

2 tablespoons Double Concentrate tomato paste

1 jar Akadi Spicy Sauce*

1 cup Aneto chicken or vegetable broth

3-4 cups cooked red beans (Rancho Gordo Hidatsa or Camellia red kidney beans)*

*A half pound of dry beans yields about 3-4 cups cooked beans; substitute the Akadi mild sauce if desired

Step 1 Cook the mushrooms with the sea salt in a dry skillet over medium heat for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they begin to look dry and there's very little liquid in the pan.

Step 2 Add the olive oil and cook for another few minutes, then add the onions. Continue to cook until the onions are very soft, about 10 minutes.

Step 3 Stir in the garlic powder, cumin seeds, tomato paste, and Akadi sauce. Add the broth and cooked beans, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent scorching. Taste and add salt if needed.