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Okra, Chicken, and Tomato Stew

I have found that most of my friends shy away from okra...until they have tried this delicious stew.

Any fears of reliving what might have been a bad past experience with a slimy version of the much underused vegetable in Indiana cooking are soon put to rest as they enjoy the crispy green pods and tender chicken smothered in a rich tomato sauce. When we serve this to guests, there are always requests for seconds (and the recipe).

10 cups cold water
½ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
½ teaspoon kosher salt
8 cups okra pods, fresh or frozen, ends removed and cut into ½ inch rounds*
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 boneless and skinless chicken breast halves
1 cup white onion, thinly sliced
1 ½ cups chicken broth, prefer homemade
4 cups canned diced tomatoes with juice, prefer homemade canned tomatoes
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
4 cups of hot white or brown rice

Put the water, lemon juice, and salt into a large bowl and add the fresh or thawed frozen okra.

Let the mixture stand at room temperature for an hour.

Remove the pods, letting the liquid drain from them back into the bowl.

Discard the liquid in the bowl.

Put the drained pods in a large strainer and rinse them under cold running water.

Place the drained and rinsed pods on several layers of paper towel or a lint free cotton kitchen towel and pat them dry.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium high heat.

Add the chicken breasts and brown them on each side (about 4-5 minutes per side).

Remove the chicken from the pan and place it on a plate.

Add the onion to the pan and sauté until lightly browned (about 5 minutes).

Add the okra to the onions and sauté for 5 minutes. Stir frequently to prevent burning.

Add the broth, tomatoes, salt, and pepper to the onion/okra mixture and bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat to low and simmer the mixture for 15 minutes.

Add the chicken breasts to the pan.

Spoon some of the okra mixture over the chicken breasts to cover them.

Cover the pan and gently simmer the stew for 20-30 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon over the hot white rice and serve immediately.

Serves 4 very generously.

* You can use frozen okra in place of the fresh okra. If using frozen okra, thaw and drain it before adding it to the lemon/water mixture.

Victoria Wesseler

*For more seasonal recipes and information about Indiana local food,
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