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Lavender Chicken Chili with White Beans

Faintly scented with culinary lavender and full of chicken, white beans, and subtle spices, this chili, adapted from the Lavender Cookbook by Sharon Shipley, is a nice alternative to the more "manly" red meat versions of the dish. Serve with White Corn Lavender Muffins for the ultimate girly girl chili experience!

1 pound dried great Northern beans, rinsed and picked over
2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into half inch dice
1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 pound ground chicken
2 medium white onions, half inch dice
5 garlic cloves, finely minced
1 fresh jalapeno or Serrano pepper, finely diced with ribs and seeds removed
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 tablespoon Provence culinary grade lavender, finely ground in a spice mill
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried marjoram
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
8 cups chicken broth or stock, prefer homemade
3 cups sharp white cheddar, grated
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
Optional garnishes: diced red onion, finely chopped cilantro, avocado slices

Place the beans in a large bowl and cover with enough cold water by at least 3 inches. Soak overnight.

Place the diced chicken in a large pot and cover with cold water.

Bring to a boil and turn down to a gentle simmer for 5 minutes.

Turn off the heat, cover and let the chicken poach for 5 minutes or until just tender and cooked through. Drain and set aside to cool.

In the same pot, add the butter and olive oil and heat over medium high heat.

Add the onions and ground chicken. Cook for 10 minutes or until the onions are translucent.

Stir in the garlic, hot pepper, cumin, lavender, oregano, marjoram, and cayenne. Sauté for two minutes.

Drain the beans and add them to the pot.

Add the broth and bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat and simmer for 2 hours or until the beans are tender. If the beans absorb all the water and are still not soft, add a cup of boiling hot water at a time to the beans as needed.

Stir the chili occasionally.

When the beans are soft, add the diced chicken and 1 cup of the cheese. Stir until the cheese melts.

Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with the remaining cheese and optional garnishes on the side.

Serves 6-8.

Victoria Wesseler