

Chili a la Zinzinnati!

You have to admit...the first time you tried to explain Cincinnati style chili and chili spaghetti to someone not blessed to be raised in this town; it was like trying to describe snow to a Polynesian. The more you explained about the whole process, the more incredulous their reaction.

Well there's not a whole lot we can do for those who have grown up somewhere else. What a shallow existence they must be experiencing. I would imagine they hardly even react when they see a pig with wings. Sad...so very sad.

On the other hand, there are those situations that take place forcing lovers of the infamous "5 Way" to relocate to other parts of the world where they can only dream of Graeter's, fried Goetta or a quick trip to your favorite Cincinnati chili parlor. I've got a twin brother that lives in Boston who insists that his move was well worth it 15 years ago just to have a great local football team. I guess the joke's on him!

Most of us have favorite Cincinnati Chili moments and one of mine took place on the day I got married. My brother, a good friend from San Francisco, and I decided that the perfect stop for lunch before the wedding was for a 5-Way and a Cheese Coney, so off we went. Later that afternoon as we were doing last preparations at the church, my mother walked in. She got this "look" on her face, wrinkled her nose, and asked "who's been eating Skyline?"

All three of us looked at each other but before we could say anything the pastor jumped in from about 10 feet away with a timid, "I guess that would be me." (We did confess shortly thereafter to the pastor's great relief!)

If you have someone out there who has moved beyond the range of the Queen City's chili influence, here is the recipe that probably started it all. This so-called original recipe was used by John Kiradjieff's restaurant, which is widely believed to have been the first Cincinnati Chili parlor, The Empress. This is the real thing!



Empress Cincinnati Chili

(6 servings)

In a 4 to 6 quart heavy bottomed Pot, bring to boil:
1 quart water

Add:

2 pounds ground chuck

Stir until separated and reduce heat to a simmer. Add:

2 medium onions, finely chopped

5 to 6 cloves garlic, crushed

One 15-ounce can tomato sauce

2 tablespoons cider vinegar

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Stir and add:

10 peppercorns, ground

8 whole allspice, ground

8 whole cloves, ground

1 large bay leaf

2 teaspoons salt

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1 ½ teaspoons ground cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ ounce unsweetened chocolate, grated

Return to a boil then reduce heat to a simmer, for 2 ½ hours cooking time in all. Cool uncovered and refrigerate overnight. Before serving, skim off all or most of the fat and discard. Reheat the chili and serve over:

Cooked spaghetti (This is a 2-way.)

Then you can add a fluffy mound of grated Cheddar cheese for a 3-Way.

Sprinkle on finely chopped onions before adding the cheese for a 4-Way.

Or if you're a full-blown fan, top each serving with ¼ cup cooked red kidney beans before adding the onions and cheese for a 5-Way.

There are, of course, other magnificent things you can do with this chili but the only added item on most menus that seasoned vet's will acknowledge as being traditional is the:

Cheese Coney

To assemble one you'll need:

- 1 very fresh, steamed hot dog bun
- 1 boiled all-beef frank
- 1 slather of yellow mustard
- 1 small ladle full of Cincinnati chili
- 1 tablespoon onions, finely minced
- 1 mound, finely shredded Cheddar cheese

Put the whole thing together in the order as listed. Douse it with a generous sprinkle of your favorite hot sauce. Dig in!

The only other ingredient I would advise would be a couple of bowls of fresh oyster crackers to take the bite out of the extra hot sauce most people use. And there you have it.

So the next time you hear from your college student, your long lost buddy pining for a dose of the good stuff or anyone else foolish enough to have moved out of the area, hang on to this week's column and pop it in the mail. You're sure to bring a smile to someone's face.

As we approach Thanksgiving I've found a nice late harvest Merlot I recently tasted, the **2003 Weinhaus Schloss Koblenz Romanian Vollreifese** that would be a real winner with the varied tastes of a traditional assortment of foods including baked ham, roasted turkey, yams and dressing. The flavor is medium sweet fruit with flavors of black cherry and wild berries and traces of cinnamon and pepper in the finish bringing out a subtle pleasant spiciness. This wine is very approachable and really easy for the new wine drinker to enjoy.

Romanian wines are just now making their entry into the American market but they are certainly not new to the business. Their best wines were shipped to the top officials in the Kremlin for years and only really began to hit the popular market after the wall came down and the country moved to a free market system.

Give me a call if you have any questions or need help locating this wine. You can also visit with us on the web at www.winedog.com. Cheers!