

Chili: An American Tradition

Americans are heating up for the chili craze. Already, more than one billion pounds of chili are consumed in U.S. homes annually and that amount is expected to increase dramatically. A group called CHILI-USA is lobbying to have chili declared the official food of the U.S. Groups, such as the International Society, exist solely for the purpose of promoting the craze for that tasty "bowl of red."

For years, the chili craze has been fostered by men like Will Rogers and former President Lyndon Johnson. Carroll Shelby, renowned designer of high-performance cars and former champion race driver, has steered into the chili business with a new packaged Texas chili seasoning mix.

Why all the chatter about chili? Why all the buzz over the bowl of red?

It all started back in the mid-1800s when cowboys who roamed the Texas ranges needed a hearty ration that could be carried with them during long cattle drives. Back then, meat and chili peppers existed in large quantities in Texas. Meat, such as buffalo, venison or beef was hacked fine and sun dried, then pounded together with chiles and seasonings to form a nonperishable mixture that could be reconstituted with water for a satisfying meal.

Chili's popularity expanded beyond Western cattle trails in the late 1800s starting San Antonio, Texas. Women called "Chili Queens" began vending chili from roadside stands and it was they who really developed chili as we know it today. By the turn of the century, chili had expanded to the U.S. Army, Texas Rangers and the Calvary. As a hub for the military, San Antonio, Texas, continued as a major chili hotspot. From these origins, true Texas chili developed. An authentic Texas bowl of red still consists of cubed beef mixed with seasonings like garlic, oregano, ground chili peppers and cumin. Tomato sauce is generally added to this mixture, but no beans.

Chili's popularity reached outside Texas particularly in the Midwest in the "Roaring 20s." The dish was also widely available during the Depression years because it was inexpensive and substantial. Chili consumption declined in the '40s and '50s, but chili lover from Texas, former President Lyndon B. Johnson, revived the nation's passion for the bowl of red.

The 1960s also saw the birth of the chili cookoff. The first cookoff was sparked by New York humorist H. Allen Smith who wrote an article denouncing chili as cooked by Texans. A group of Texas "chillheads" - Carroll Shelby, Dave Witts, Bill Neale, Frank Tolbert and



Based on years of Texas chili tradition, Carroll Shelby's Lone Star Chili is made with coarsely chopped beef, tomato sauce and his own special Texas blend of spices for authentic Texas taste. Shelby's secret spice blend is now available in supermarkets nationally as Carroll Shelby's Original Texas Brand chili preparation in a brown bag.

Tom Tierney - set out to teach Smith a lesson. They organized a cookoff between Smith and Texan Wick Fowler and it was held on Shelby and Witts' ranch in Terlingua, Texas. This first event sparked the founding of the International Chili Society which has been responsible for staging the World Championship Chili Cookoff ever since.

In the last 20 years, Americans' passion for chili and chili cookoffs has really taken off. This year, 17,000 people are expected to attend the 20th annual World Championship Chili Cookoff on Sunday, October 26, from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. As a member of the Board of Governors of the International Chili Society, Carroll Shelby has devoted a great deal of time to keeping that craze alive and cooking. In 1976, he founded his own chili company which produces Carroll Shelby's Original Texas Brand chili preparation, a combination of four spice packets which come in a brown bag. Shelby's secret recipe is based on more than 200 years of Texas chili tradition.

- CARROLL SHELBY'S LONE STAR CHILI**
- 2 lbs. lean beef, coarsely chopped
 - 1/4 c. oil
 - 1 c. chopped onion
 - 1 green pepper, chopped
 - 1 large garlic clove, minced
 - 1 15-oz. can tomato sauce
 - 1 8-oz. can beer
 - 1 pkg. Carroll Shelby's Original Texas Brand chili preparation

Brown meat in oil in large saucepan; drain. Add onions, peppers and garlic; cook until tender. Add tomato sauce and two-thirds cup beer. Bring to boil; reduce heat. Cover; simmer 30 minutes. Add large spice packet and salt to taste; continue simmering one hour, stirring occasionally. Gradually add remaining beer to masa flour, stirring until well blended. Add to meat mixture; continue simmering 30 minutes. Add cayenne pepper to taste. Makes six 1-cup servings.



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