

Chilly on the outside, chili on the inside

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Wednesday, January 04, 2023

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My daughter, Keely, after graduating from [UALR](#) (University of Arkansas at Little Rock) and before entering [law school](#) at the [University of Oklahoma](#), did several things to keep body and soul together. After divorcing her first husband she went to work at the [Poteau, OK](#) newspaper, [The Poteau Daily News](#). She worked first as a reporter, and then later was also one of the editors. As a reporter she once interviewed an active NFL quarterback, [Jake Plummer](#) of the [Arizona Cardinals](#), who was in town as part of an advertising campaign. I asked Keely what she thought of him. Her reply was that he appeared to her as if he had been hit in the head one too many times.

Just as an aside, Poteau, which is on the Arkansas and Oklahoma border south of [Ft. Smith, Arkansas](#), is known locally as Podunk. If you have ever been to this town of 8,000 souls, you would understand why. It functions as a somewhat larger town as it is the shopping and business center for all the farms, ranches and country folk on both sides of the border for a radius of many miles, but Podunk still fits. If folks are feeling really salty, they drive on in to the [Hanging Judge](#)'s town of Ft. Smith.

It was in Podunk that she met her current husband, Robin, who worked as the Oklahoma capital reporter for the newspaper chain that owned *The Poteau Daily News*.

After she remarried, she moved to [Norman, Oklahoma](#) to be with her new husband. There, for a period of time before entering law school, she was one of many speech writers for the President of the University of Oklahoma, at the time former Senator, [David Boren](#). This sounds like a really cool job, but, as I remember it, she found it excessively boring. I imagine, though, after interviewing Jake Plummer and Farmer Jones, most office jobs would be a bit humdrum.

While working as an editor for *The Poteau Daily News*, she created a page entitled, *Chilly on the outside, chili on the inside*. Yup, you guessed, it was fall and the time for a bunch of chili recipes. You have got to love those newspaper puns. For your amusement I have scanned part of the yellowing page that I have saved all these long years and included it at the top of this article. There was one section that I really loved:

"Chili is not something I have ever cooked. In my family that is a manly domain. My dad and brother

make chili that makes your nose run. For that reason chili has not been something I often eat, either. I like my tonsils just the way they are, thank you. I did not find anything that said ‘Chili for sissies’, but some of these don’t look too bad.”

Manly domain indeed! And yes I do like my chili on the spicy side, but my current recipe is only slightly spicy as otherwise *Señora* would not partake. I believe the number of chili recipes, variations on the same, is fast approaching infinity. In this recipe I use hamburger meat, but I have made it with stew meat or round steak, cut small. You just need to cook it longer and slower to have the meat fall completely apart. Sharing your favorite chili recipe is almost as dangerous – folks have very strong opinions about both – as sharing your favorite version of [Leonard Cohen](#)’s [Hallelujah](#), mine being [Renée Fleming](#)’s [version](#) on her album, [Dark Hope](#). Anyway here it goes with my current recipe subject to revisions, additions, and the general riffing on a theme, omitting, for *Señora*, jalapenos, hot sauce, chocolate, beer...

A Chili Recipe that will not burn *Señora*’s tonsils

2 tbsp oil
4 onions of a manly size, diced
1/4 to 1/2 cup green pepper, diced
6 cloves garlic, diced
2 pounds hamburger
1 10 oz. can Rotel tomatoes
1 14 oz. can diced tomatoes
1/4 to 1/3 cup chili powder, depending on your taste
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp cumin
1 tbsp dried oregano
1/4 tsp cayenne
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 standard can of kidney beans

1. Heat oil in a large dutch oven or other large, heavy bottomed pot ([they make the rocking world go ‘round](#))
2. Add onions, green peppers, garlic — sauteing until onions are translucent, but not caramelized
3. Add hamburger meat and cook until brown
4. Add other ingredients EXCEPT kidney beans
5. Simmer for an 1 1/2 to 2 hours, stirring occasionally to allow flavors to blend. Add water as needed, but be careful, the chili should be thick, not soupy.
6. 10 or 15 minutes before done, add kidney beans and liquid from can
7. Serve with saltines, or over Fritos. Have shredded cheese, diced onions, sour cream available for sprinkling on top. Also hot sauce as [Some Like It Hot](#). (Shhh – Don’t tell anyone, but I have been not so secretly in love with [Marilyn Monroe](#), frozen in time as she is, for longer than I can remember). That’s right, we were talking chili.
8. Enjoy
9. Even better the second day

And so it went, back in the day.

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