

CHICKEN & SAUSAGE GUMBO

Time from start to serve: 2 hours minimum. Serves 4.

GUMBO is a classic Cajun dish from the Gulf Coast, blending West African, French, Spanish, and Native American cuisines. When buying ingredients, get the best quality stuff you can; this is what distinguishes good gumbo from great gumbo. For equipment, you will need a cast iron pan (sides at least 1 inch high) and a metal stock pot. The proportions of this recipe are inexact, allowing the chef room for personal taste.

The key process to all Cajun cooking is making a “roux”: flour toasted in hot oil, then tossed in the holy trinity (celery, onions, and bell peppers). A blonde roux is used for seafood dishes, a peanut-butter to chocolate colour is best for a land-meat gumbo (which doesn’t traditionally have peppers). A rule of thumb: you can always add liquid smoke to give it a better roux flavour, but a burnt roux is impossible to unburn.

Ingredients

For the Stock:

- 1 Chicken Stock Cube
- Seafood Stock / One bottle Clam juice
- 2 Andouille Sausage (Zatarain’s is the best, found at Dillon’s)
- 1 whole roast chicken (get it from the deli section)
- A slice of lunch meat (this was my great grandmother’s idea, exactly 30¢ in 1930s dollars)
- Thyme, Bay leaves, and Sage

For the Roux:

- Celery, diced in advance
- 1 White Onion, diced in advance
- ½ to ⅔ cup of flour, added in parts
- Vegetable oil, enough to cover the bottom of the pan
- Green onions (garnish)
- Gumbo Filé Powder (found at Checkers, a Native American thickener made from ground sassafras)
- Parsley
- Rice (or steamed cauliflower)
- White Pepper (to taste)
- Cayenne Pepper (To Taste)
- Liquid Smoke (Optional)

Preparation

1. **Prepare the Stock.** In the stockpot, add the de-boned chicken meat, the stock cube, seafood

stock/clam juice, sage, bay leaves, and thyme. Fill the stockpot with enough water to just barely immerse the ingredients; you can always add more later. As the stock comes to boil over medium heat, prepare enough chopped veggies to just fill your cast iron skillet. Reduce heat to simmer when the roiling boil begins.

2. **Make the Roux.** Get vegetable oil hot on a large cast iron skillet, over medium heat. Add ¼ cup of the flour and stir gently. The centre of the pan will be the hottest, so make sure to keep shoving the roux towards it. Use your nose and your eyes to determine how dark you want the roux – blonde will be thicker in the end product, but a dark chocolate coloured roux will have the best flavour. Add oil if the paste becomes too stiff to move fluidly; add flour if it becomes too runny.
3. **Fry the vegetables.** Once the roux is a nice peanut-butter to chocolate colour, add the three vegetables and turn the heat off. Add as much vegetables as can safely fit in the pan; any extra can go in the stock. Stir so that the sauce covers the vegetables; let the hot pan coast its heat off. When the veggies are sticking together like a gummy ball, that’s when it’s done. Stir it into the stock, stewing slow and low; stir every 20 minutes.
4. Taste the stock to check its flavour. If the stock isn’t smokey enough, add a few drops of liquid smoke. The smoke flavour will always diminish over time. As the stock cooks, brown the sliced andouille with oil in the cast iron; this will simultaneously save all the flavour from the roux, clean the pan, and give the meat a nice flavour. Add the sausage to the pot.
5. Let the stockpot stew for as long as you wish, at least one hour. Add the parsley.
6. Serve over rice with Green Onions & Filé powder as a garnish.