

Warming Red Pozole

By monkeymom

Food52 Editors' Comments: WHO: Monkeymom is a Bay Area scientist and three-time Food52 contest winner. WHAT: A crowd-feeding stew to keep on hand as the weather gets colder. HOW: Toast and soak dried chiles, then purée them into a paste with sautéed onion and garlic. Brown pork shoulder on the stove, add stock, hominy, and the chile paste, and cook on low heat for a couple of hours. Top with sliced vegetables, crumbled cheese, and avocado. WHY WE LOVE IT: When we imagine an autumn night -- strong winds blowing outside and a pot bubbling on the stove -- this is the stew in the pot. There's only a few minutes of work to do before you can let it simmer away and develop its rich, spicy flavor. For a fall picnic (or to bring the soup to work): Ladle it into a thermos and pack up the toppings separately; assemble at your destination.

I didn't grow up eating pozole, but I sure fell in love with it once I tried it at Nopalito restaurant in San Francisco. Pozole is a fantastic stew of chiles, pork, and hominy that is often served around the holidays. I love that each person can customize their own bowl with their favorite combination of toppings. Nopalito uses watermelon radishes, which make the dish especially stunning. This version is easy to put together and you can make a big batch to keep on hand for visitors, potlucks, or just dinner for the family. It really feels warm and comforting, whether you grew up eating pozole or not.

Serves 10 to 12

- 4 dried New Mexico chiles, stems and seeds removed
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
 - 6 cloves of garlic, peeled
 - 3 pounds pork shoulder or country style ribs, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
 - 2 teaspoons cumin
 - Salt and pepper
 - 2 cups chicken stock
 - 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 - 2 cans hominy, drained and rinsed
 - Water
 - Cabbage, shredded finely
 - Radishes, sliced thinly
 - Limes, quartered for squeezing
 - Avocado, cut into small chunks
 - Tortilla chips or corn tortillas
 - Cilantro, coarsely chopped
 - Crumbled queso fresco or your cheese of choice
1. Toast chiles in a dry pan over high heat for a few minutes until slightly browned. As you heat them, they should puff up, soften, and become fragrant. Remove from pan, let cool, and cut or tear roughly. Pour 1 cup boiling water over them to soften them for 15 minutes.
 2. Add oil to a large, heavy pot and turn the flame to medium high. Add onions and garlic and sauté

until onions have soften and colored. Remove from heat.

3. Add onions and garlic to a blender with the chiles and their liquid. Purée until smooth.
4. Put pot back on high heat and brown the pork in two batches. Add 1 teaspoon cumin, salt, and pepper to each batch as the pieces brown. Add all pork back to pot along with chile liquid, chicken stock, oregano, and hominy. The liquid should completely cover the pork. Add water or more stock if necessary. Bring to boil then lower to simmer. Taste for seasoning and add more salt, pepper, or cumin to suit your taste. Cover the pot and cook the stew over low heat for 2 hours.
5. While the pozole cooks, get toppings ready.
6. To serve: Ladle pozole into bowl. Top with cabbage, radishes, and any other toppings. Squeeze a healthy dose of lime juice into your bowl and dig in!