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Hearty Soup made with Perfect Hominy

By Susie Iventosch

My sister has been making posole for years, but it never occurred to me to try it until I encountered a shelf in the grocery store boasting both blue and white bags of posole. I pondered over which way to go, and decided that since it was going to be a preliminary attempt, I would go for the white variety. What



Chicken Posole (also Pozole)

Photo Susie Iventosch

is posole anyway? Basically, it is hominy, but sometimes the word posole, which is actually the name of a Mexican soup, is also used for the hominy itself. So, what is hominy? It is corn kernels that have undergone a process called nixtamalization, which is a soaking in an alkaline solution, usually a mineral lime bath. This process loosens the hulls and softens the kernel, allowing the kernels to nearly double in size. But, remember, when you buy dried hominy, the kernels are very, very hard, so don't try biting into them ... yet!

Now, keeping in mind that my sister uses canned hominy in her posole, I began to wonder if perhaps I was a little crazy, because the

process takes a lot more time than opening a can. First, you rinse the kernels, and then you soak them in water overnight, before boiling them in salted water or broth for a couple of hours to get them to the desired, al dente texture. All of this is before you begin any of the other soup fixings. After making, eating and enjoying this posole very much, I would say that the time spent was well worth it. The texture of the hominy is delightful and so flavorful, too. This is a delicious and very hearty soup, one that, along with a salad, makes a fine meal. Also, you can prepare the hominy and chicken a day or two ahead of time and refrigerate them until you are ready to make the soup.

INGREDIENTS

Hominy

- 6 ounces dried hominy (posole)
- 4 cups water (approximately)
- 4 cups chicken broth (approximately)
- ½ Ortega chili (use the other half in soup)
- ½ Poblano pepper (use the other half in the rest of the soup)

Chicken

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- ½ red onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and thinly sliced
- ½ cup dry white wine

Soup

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ red onion, chopped (chop the whole onion and save half for the chicken)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ Ortega chili, chopped (the other half is cooked with the hominy)
- ½ Poblano pepper, chopped (the other half is cooked with the hominy)
- 3 tomatoes, chopped
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons oregano
- 1 14-ounce can pinto beans, drained
- 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes in juices
- 2 cups chicken broth
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Garnishes

- Lime slices or wedges
- Radishes, thinly sliced
- Avocado, sliced
- Cilantro leaves
- Sharp cheddar, grated

DIRECTIONS

Hominy

Rinse hominy in a colander and place in a glass or plastic bowl. Cover with water, and allow to sit overnight. In the morning, drain the water from the hominy and place it in a pot with a tight-fitting lid. Add about 4 cups of chicken broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, but continue to cook at a low boil for approximately two hours, or until hominy kernels have blossomed in size and have an al dente texture. Set aside. (Can make a day or more ahead of time.)

Chicken

Preheat oven to 350F. Spray a baking dish, and place chicken breasts in bottom of dish. Sprinkle oregano, paprika and cumin on chicken breasts and rub into the meat. Mince garlic over chicken and scatter chopped onions and sliced jalapeno on and around chicken. Pour white wine over the chicken and cover the dish tightly with foil. Bake for approximately 45 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through. Remove from oven, reserve onions, peppers and juices, but place chicken on a cutting board and shred (or pull) with two forks. Place shredded chicken back into juices and cool to room temperature. Refrigerate until ready to use. (Can also make a day or two ahead of time.)

Soup

In a large soup pot, sauté onion and garlic in olive oil until translucent. Add spices and the reserved chopped Ortega and Poblano peppers and continue to cook for another few minutes. Stir in chopped fresh tomatoes. When heated, add canned tomatoes and all of the juices, drained pinto beans, reserved cooked hominy and 2 cups of chicken broth. Bring to a rolling boil, reduce heat, and simmer for another 20 to 30 minutes. Add chicken about five or 10 minutes before ready to serve, and cook until chicken is heated through. Serve in bowls and garnish with grated cheddar, sliced radishes, sliced avocado and cilantro leaves. Pass lime wedges for each person to squeeze over their soup.



Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. **This recipe can be found on our website:** www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

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