

Menudo: A Celebration Of Community

Everyone knows that menudo is the official breakfast you have after a long night of revelry, and any will swear that it is the perfect cure for a hangover. For our family it marked the joy of Christmas and New Year, for there was always a potful on the stove to greet our relatives and friends as they performed their holiday *visita*.

The origins of menudo, like barbacoa, are all about affirming community and relationships within a social context that, sadly, was marked by structural racism and economic poverty. The moneyed classes looked on tripe, a cow's stomach, as inedible and they discarded it. Along with other offal, it was the only protein available to poor families, so the culinary artists among them found ways to make it into the delicious and complex tasting dish that menudo is today. Expensive restaurants now serve menudo, but the best menudos are still to be found only in Mexican homes or served in barrio restaurants.

Make a big batch, and serve it with lime slices, tiny diced onion, corn tortillas and sure, why not, extra oregano.

Recipe for Menudo | Red Chile Tripe Soup

This recipe is from my history and cookbook, [Truly Texas Mexican: A Native Culinary Heritage In Recipes](#)

Ingredients (serves 8)

2 pounds honeycomb tripe

7 garlic cloves, peeled and cut in half

1 small white onion, peeled and quartered

1-1/2 gallons water

1 tablespoon salt or to taste

1-1/2 pounds maíz pozolero ([recipe here](#)) or canned hominy

For Accompaniments

3 Mexican limes, cut in wedges

1 white onion, finely diced

1 dozen corn tortillas

For the Chile Paste

2 guajillo chiles, deseeded and deveined

3 ancho chiles, deseeded and deveined

1 1/2 tablespoons dried Mexican oregano

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

3 garlic cloves

1 cup water

Method

1. Wash the tripe thoroughly and cut it into 1-inch squares.

2. Place in a large pot, add 1-1/2 gallons of water, and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat to an energetic boil and cook until tender. Depending on the tripe, cooking could take 3–6 hours. From time to time, skim and discard the foam that forms on the top.

For the Chile Paste

3. To devein the chiles, first lay the chile flat on a cutting board and, using a paring knife, cut a slit lengthwise. Then grab the chile with one hand and with the other break off the stem. Open the chile along the slit and remove the seeds and veins.

4. In a large saucepan, cover the cleaned chiles with water and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat and let the chiles steep for 15 minutes so that they rehydrate and become tender. Drain the chiles, discarding the water. Let the chiles cool a bit so as not to damage your blender.

5. Place the chiles in a blender along with the garlic, cumin, and oregano. Blend to a very fine paste, adding water as needed. You will need to add 1/2–1 cup water.

6. When the menudo is cooked tender, add the chile paste and hominy and cook, uncovered, for another 30 minutes.

Serve with hot corn tortillas, lime wedges, and diced white onion. You'll feel restored.