



The Chili Cookbook: A History of the One-Pot Classic, with Cook-off Worthy Recipes from Three-Bean to Four-Alarm and Con Carne to Vegetarian

By Robb Walsh

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A cookbook devoted to the family friendly, tailgate party classic--featuring more than 60 tried-and-true recipes--from veteran cookbook author and Americana expert Robb Walsh.

Americans love chili. Whether served as a hearty family dinner, at a potluck with friends, or as the main dish at a football-watching party, chili is a crowd-pleaser. It's slathered over tamales in San Antonio, hot dogs in Detroit, and hamburgers in Los Angeles. It's ladled over spaghetti in Cincinnati, hash browns in St. Louis, and Fritos corn chips in Santa Fe.

In *The Chili Cookbook*, award-winning author Robb Walsh digs deep into the fascinating history of this quintessential American dish. Who knew the cooking technique traces its history to the ancient Aztecs, or that Hungarian goulash inspired the invention of chili powder?

Fans in every region of the country boast the "one true recipe," and Robb Walsh recreates them all—60 mouth-watering chilis from easy slow-cooker suppers to stunning braised meat creations. There are beef, venison, pork, lamb, turkey, chicken, and shrimp chilis to choose from—there is even an entire chapter on vegetarian chili. *The Chili Cookbook* is sure to satisfy all your chili cravings.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Robb Walsh's new book embraces, examines, and celebrates all variety of chili pepper stew. Lucky us. Walsh is one of the great chroniclers of Texas foodways, a thoughtful historian and a warm, charming writer to boot, and while many cookbooks are written to be read as much as cooked from, rarely does one so deftly strike a balance between both."

- *Eater*

"While no individual chili is capable of satisfying everyone, I guarantee every chili fan will find a recipe in *The Chili Cookbook* that suits their needs. Robb Walsh, a food writer best known for his books on Tex-Mex and barbecue, is about as comprehensive as one can get in single subject cookbook."

- *Epicurious*

"As far as I'm concerned, there are only two books on the history of chili: my father's *A Bowl of Red* and Robb Walsh's *The Chili Cookbook*."

- **Frank X. Tolbert 2**

"Walsh is one of food writing's best storytellers, so the book is satisfying even if you never whip out your Dutch oven and get cooking. You should, though: The fascinating tale is best enjoyed with a big bowl of *chili con carne*. (Walsh's recipe from El Real in Houston is killer.)"

- *Serious Eats*

About the Author

Veteran food writer and three-time James Beard Award winner ROBB WALSH is the author of more than a dozen cookbooks, including the iconic *Tex-Mex Cookbook* and *Legends of Texas Barbecue*. A former restaurant reviewer for the *Austin Chronicle*, *Houston Press*, and *Houstonia Magazine*, Walsh lives in Houston, Texas, and co-owns El Real Tex-Mex Cafe with chef Bryan Caswell. He is a cofounder and board member of Foodways Texas.

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Introduction

If chili is enjoying a revival lately, it's not the second coming—more like the third or fourth, depending on when you start counting. The history of chili con carne is deep, dark, and very complicated.

Mexicans, Texans, New Mexicans, and Midwesterners have been arguing about chili for well over a century. They are still debating what it is, how to spell it, and who invented it. Other subjects of contention include: one "L" or two in the middle, "I" or "E" on the end; tomato versus no tomato, beans versus no beans, ground meat versus hand chopped, and disputes about spices so arcane, they defy rational explanation.

As a partner in a Tex-Mex restaurant where we serve gallons and gallons of Texas chili every day, I have to confess that I am not an objective observer. But as a student of food history and an enthusiastic consumer, I put my preconceptions aside long enough to research this book. And I was richly rewarded with good chili from unexpected places and amazing (sometimes true) tales. This book delves into the five hundred years of chili history beginning with the Aztec chile stews the conquistadors sampled in the markets of Montezuma in the 1500s and includes chili recipes inspired by the Spanish mission era of the 1700s, when the first chile peppers were cultivated in North America and the cattle-herding traditions of the Texas cowboys were born.

Several chapters focus on Texas chili, including the San Antonio version of the 1800s, the heyday of the Chili Queens and the Chicago World's Fair of 1894 where Tex-Mex chili created a sensation. The spread of chili across the Midwest in the 1900s takes us for a trip down that highway of memory called Route 66. There are side trips to Ohio, Michigan, and Washington, DC. And finally, we return to the twenty-first century home kitchen, where chili has taken on a new identity as the most modern of American dishes.

If you love chili, you will probably find some of the recipes in this book comforting and some of them vexing, especially if you're a purist with firmly held ideas about beans or spaghetti or whatever. Suspend your disbelief for a just a bit and trust your taste buds. The modern recipes in the book include lamb chilis, pork chilis, chicken chilis, shrimp chili, and yes, even a whole chapter on meatless chilis (because vegetarians have to eat, too). Recipes for Hungarian goulash, Pakistani keema, and Greek spaghetti sauce are also included as part of my argument that each has played a part in chili's colorful history.

Some of the cooking instructions are ridiculously simple, and some are more ambitious. Cooking methods have evolved from cast-iron pots on the campfire to the modern stovetop, and now include convenient slow-cooker variations that you can start in the morning and eat when you get home from work. Read a few of the stories and try a few of the recipes collected here, and you may come to the same conclusion I did—that chili is both a quintessential American dish and a part of an ancient chile pepper culture that has become deeply ingrained in the whole world's cooking.

Chili Kitchen Notes

Before we get started, let's make sure we're all on the same page when it comes to equipment and ingredients.

Equipment Most recipes in this book call for a Dutch oven, meaning a heavy-duty pot with a 5- to 7-quart capacity and a lid. You can substitute a soup pot, stew pot, or any other vessel that comfortably holds the amount of chili you require, but to avoid burning, I recommend cast-iron, enamelware, or any heavy-duty pot made with multiple layers of metal, such as All-Clad. Most chilis do extremely well in the slow-cooker (see box on page 3).

Ratio The basic ratio of ingredients that go into a well-seasoned chili was established by spice manufacturer and chili pioneer William Gebhardt (see page 46). His formula calls for 2 pounds of meat to 1 ounce (4 tablespoons) of chili powder to 4 cups of liquid. Standard additions include garlic, onions, and canned tomatoes.

Meats Beef was central to the old-fashioned chilis of the nineteenth century; however, even in those days venison and bison were common alternatives. Turkey chile stew goes back to the pre-Columbian era. Pork and lamb are excellent modern choices. In other words, use what you have or what inspires you.

Meat Prep In the earliest days of chili, meats were chopped or minced by hand, but ground meats have become more typical and are certainly convenient. "Chili grind" is a term used by Texas butchers to describe meats that have been coarsely ground using a 1/2-inch plate. It is ideal if you are looking for a more old-school texture but don't want to go to the trouble of hand-chopping your meat.

Masa Harina Masa harina is a powder that's used to make the dough for corn tortillas (page 25). It's also a favorite thickener in Texas-style chili con carne. The most common brand of masa harina in Mexico and the United States is Maseca; it's available in any grocery store that sells Mexican ingredients.

Serving Size For the recipes in this book, one serving of chili is a generous 1/2 cup. Figure on using a 1/4 cup if you want an appetizer-size serving.

Leftovers and Storage Store leftover chili in a covered container in the refrigerator; it will keep for up to 4 days. In fact, chili is reputed to get better after sitting in the fridge for awhile. Chili freezes very well and can be kept for up to 3 months in the freezer. When preparing a large batch recipe, such as Homemade Coney Sauce (page 132), consider freezing the chili in several containers so you can thaw only the amount required.

Chili in the Slow-Cooker

This icon has been added to recipes that do well in a slow-cooker. A long simmer time is ideal for many chilis and a 6-quart capacity slow-cooker will hold even the largest recipes in this book. If you want to cook chili all day while you are at work, just set the cooker on low—the chili meat will be fine.

If the recipe has beans, though, make sure to add the beans later. Canned beans will turn to mush if they cook too long. If you are cooking a chili that contains beans in an unattended slow-cooker, you will want to wait to add them 20 to 30 minutes before serving. Some of the chilis in this book aren't right for a slow-cooker, so look for the icon.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carrie Grogan:

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Erin Marshall:

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