

Chicken Stew with Okra

GOURMET OCTOBER 2005

Yield Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 (3- to 3 1/2-lb) chicken, cut into 10 serving pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups seeded, peeled and diced fresh tomatoes or 1 (14- to 15-oz) can diced tomatoes in juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/4 cup peanut or palm oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced and mashed to a paste with 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 teaspoons cayenne
- 1/2 cup smooth peanut butter at room temperature
- 1 3/4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth (14 fl oz)
- 1 lb sweet potato
- 1 cup 1/2 sliced okra

Accompaniment: rice

Preparation

Arrange chicken in 1 layer on a tray, then sprinkle with salt and let stand at room temperature 30 minutes.

While chicken stands, pulse tomatoes with their juice in a food processor until finely chopped. Stir water into tomato paste in a small bowl until smooth.

Pat chicken dry. Heat oil in a 10- to 12-inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then brown chicken, without crowding, in 3 or 4 batches, turning over occasionally, until golden, about 6 minutes per batch. Transfer with tongs as browned to a 6- to 7-quart heavy pot. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons fat from skillet, then add onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until edges are golden, 2 to 3 minutes.

Add onion, chopped tomatoes, tomato paste mixture, garlic paste, and cayenne to chicken in pot. Whisk together peanut butter and 1 cup broth in a bowl until smooth, then add to chicken along with remaining 3/4 cup broth, stirring to combine well (chicken will not be completely covered with liquid). Bring to a boil, uncovered, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally (to prevent sticking), until chicken is very tender, 25 to 30 minutes.

Peel sweet potato and cut into 1-inch chunks. Stir into stew along with okra, then simmer, covered, until potato is tender but not falling apart, 10 to 12 minutes.

Cooks' note:

Chicken stew, without sweet potato and okra, can be made 1 day ahead and cooled completely, uncovered, then chilled, covered. Reheat stew before proceeding with recipe.