

# Warm up with bean and barley chili

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I'm sure it's my Texas upbringing, but I never trust a chili recipe that doesn't pack some heat. Generally, I'm not as much of a purist about the dish as I once was; moving to a plant-based diet will do that to you, especially when it comes to something as meat-heavy as a traditional chile con carne. Still, the dish needs to live up to its name: What's chili without chiles?

I've made plenty of chilis in my day that start with whole dried peppers, but this version – like so many others – depends on ground and flaked versions for quickness and ease. Author Isa Chandra Moskowitz uses an appropriately heavy hand with those spices and others, giving this thick, hearty stew a backbone of strong flavors. Protein comes from beans (naturally), and she throws in pearled barley for more nutrition and texture. For depth and tang: lime juice and a little beer! The result is something you'll want in your repertoire of cold-weather comforts. If a bowl of this doesn't warm you up, nothing will.



Washington Post

**This vegan bean and barley chili can still bring the heat.**

## Bean and barley chili

8 to 10 servings

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 green bell peppers, chopped (about 2½ cups)
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped (about 1½ cups)
- 3 bay leaves
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt, or more as needed
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped

- 3 tablespoons mild chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano (preferably Mexican)
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 cup light-colored Mexican beer, such as Tecate or Modelo
- 3 cups no-salt-added vegetable broth
- ¾ cup pearled barley
- One (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- One (25-ounce) can kidney beans, drained and rinsed, or 2½ cups cooked kidney beans
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon agave nectar (optional)

In a 4-quart pot over medium-high heat, heat the oil until shimmering. Stir in the green peppers, onion, bay leaves and ½ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring frequently, until the onion is lightly browned, about 10 minutes.

Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the chili powder, cumin, oregano, remaining 1 teaspoon salt and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring, to toast the spices, about 1 minute.

Pour in the beer and scrape the

bottom of the pan to deglaze. Cook for about 2 minutes, then stir in the vegetable broth and barley. Partially cover the pot, leaving the lid slightly ajar to let steam escape, and turn up the heat to bring the chili to a gentle boil. Boil until the barley is almost tender, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes.

Add the tomatoes and beans. Increase the heat to medium-high to bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer and cover the pot again with the lid slightly ajar. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the barley is tender and the chili is thick, 20 to 30 minutes. Add a little water, if necessary, to thin the chili to your liking.

Stir in the lime juice and agave, if using, then taste and season with more salt, if needed. Remove the bay leaves, if you can find them. Serve hot, with your choice of accompaniments.

Pearl barley gives this chili a hearty texture, while spices – including a hefty dose of chili powder – add a nice kick.

(Adapted from “I Can Cook Vegan,” by Isa Chandra Moskowitz. Abrams, 2019.)

## THE PEOPLE'S PHARMACY

# Saffron helped control macular degeneration

**Q:** You had a letter from a person who was taking saffron for age-related macular degeneration. Since I have AMD, I am willing to try anything that might alleviate symptoms.

**A:** I began taking the spice with no real idea of how much I should use. At my next eye exam, there was definitely improvement, something my eye doctor said he had never seen. This has continued through three subsequent exams. In fact, the AMD has almost completely disappeared in one eye.

**Q:** I have also been taking specific eye vitamins (AREDS) along with the saffron, but I had been taking them with no improvement prior to taking saffron. Why didn't you mention saffron to the reader a few weeks ago who was looking for something to keep her age-related macular degeneration from getting worse?

**A:** Not everyone may benefit as I have from this spice, but every AMD sufferer should consider it. It's relatively inexpensive. Actually, I would have paid thousands for the results I've received. Thank you so very much for the information you provided that has helped me see improvement in slowing my AMD.

**A:** What a great story! Since the initial column you read two years ago, scientists have done further research on saffron for protecting the retina and helping macular degeneration. Italian researchers found that AMD patients taking 20 mg/day of saffron had no

deterioration of vision over more than two years, while those taking the recommended nutrients lutein and zeaxanthin did (Antioxidants, July 17, 2019).

A separate randomized placebo-controlled clinical trial in Australia tested saffron at 20 mg/day against

placebo in 100 people with age-related macular degeneration (Graefe's Archive for Clinical and Experimental Ophthalmology, January 2019).

The investigators concluded “Saffron supplementation modestly improved visual function in participants with AMD, including those using AREDS supplements. Given the chronic nature of AMD, longer-term supplementation may produce greater benefits.” Those on saffron had no more side effects than those on placebo.

We agree that AMD patients should discuss saffron supplements with their ophthalmologists. Taking saffron together with AREDS vitamins seems to provide additional benefit.

**Q:** After a recent orthopedic surgery, I experienced nausea as an aftereffect of anesthesia. The anti-nausea meds did nothing, but a neighbor brought me ginger root.

**A:** She instructed me to chop it, put it in a cup of water and heat it in the microwave. This ginger tea had an almost immediate effect and relieved my nausea for good. I was amazed.

**A:** Thank you for sharing your experience with ginger. Post-operative nausea is indeed a common reaction to anesthesia. In one study, clinical researchers compared the effects of ginger with those of a sedative, dexmedetomidine (Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine, online, Oct. 1, 2019). They found that both treatments eased nausea and vomiting, but ginger was more effective.

You can learn more about ginger and other strategies for alleviating stomach upset in our eGuide to Digestive Disorders. It can be found in the Health eGuides section of peoplespharmacy.com.

People's Pharmacy airs at 2 p.m. Saturdays on WBFO-FM.