



## Cajun Gumbo

Wed, 11/03/2010 - 13:36 -- david e kelley

Cajun gumbo

Rained all day yesterday (Tuesday, not Monday), also low 50s, cooler than we've been in a long time. I thought, what a night to have a steaming bowl of Cajun Gumbo with rice and cornbread!

There are as many recipes for gumbo, as there are people who make it, so I'll just describe my experience last night. The critical part of creating a good gumbo is making the roux; roughly equal parts of fat and flour. Sounds simple and it should be. The trick of a Cajun roux is to cook it until it becomes the color of dark brown boot leather without burning it. This requires constant attention and much whisking. Don't try to rush this process; it may take up to 45 minutes.

I prepared the ingredients; browned 1lb Andouille and ½ lb Chaurise sausage (make my own), browned 2 large chicken thighs, diced 2 Cups onion, diced 1 cup green bell pepper, 1 cup celery, crushed 4 garlic cloves, and cross sliced 2 cups okra. The onions, bell pepper, and celery are commonly called the holy trinity of Cajun cooking. I don't know a Cajun who doesn't add garlic. Started the roux, 2/3 cup oil, 1 cup flour in a heavy dutch oven, put rice on to cook, and my bride mixed the cornbread batter. Good so far.

While stirring the roux, I was distracted and went outside to see why my dogs were barking. Naturally I had to let them pet me a little. An aroma drifted through the door, so I rushed inside to find burned roux and much smoke in the kitchen. Turned the vent hood up full blast and an air purifier to high. I had to start over, as soon as I could see clearly. The smoke cleared and I put oil in a clean pot to heat. I went out on the porch for a breath of air and stayed a bit too long. Again, smoke filled the kitchen until the fans cleared it out. I was tempted to change our menu to a sandwich, but being a stubborn Irish Texan I started over with a vow to chain myself to the stovetop.

I didn't leave the roux until it was the dark color needed, added the vegetables, 2 tablespoons of Cajun spices, and let the flavors meld for a while, then added the sausage and chicken in bite sized pieces, filled the pot with water, brought it to a boil, lowered the heat and covered the pot.

After an hour I tasted the gumbo for seasoning, added salt to taste, and a big tablespoon of gumbo file. Simmered, covered, for about another 45 minutes.

The supper was delicious, and brought back memories of my travels through south Louisiana. Most of the visits have their own story.

A Cajun friend told me the secret of Cajun cooking is ? don't soon?, meaning don't try to rush the flavors or the cooking time. Excellent advice; just wish I had remembered it sooner.

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