

Test Kitchen launches 'Revolution'



When it comes to recipe testing, no one does it better or more thoroughly than Chris Kimball and his America's Test Kitchen, both the PBS show and the test kitchen itself, where recipes are exhaustively made, remade and re-remade. So when Kimball's crew decided to tackle the slow cooker, they revved up 20-30 slow cookers every day for nearly a year.

The result is "Slow Cooker Revolution" (America's Test Kitchen 326 pp., \$26.95), a compendium of tips, tricks and 200 recipes, including instructions for Thai stews, chicken curries, beef braises, and even a Bachelor Beef Stew that requires no knife work at all. Along the way, the crew shares tips on intensifying flavor, microwave shortcuts and the joy of soy, which deepens flavor and adds subtle complexity.

Here's just a taste:

Vegetarian Black Bean Chili

Serves 6-8

Note: To make this dish spicier, add the chile seeds. Serve with a squeeze of lime, shredded cheddar and diced purple onion.

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| 2 tablespoons vegetable oil | broth, divided |
| 2 onions, minced | 2½ cups water |
| 2 red bell peppers, stemmed, seeded and minced | 1 pound dried black beans, picked over and rinsed |
| 2 jalapeño chiles, stemmed, seeded and minced | 10 ounces white mushrooms, trimmed and halved |
| 9 garlic cloves, minced | 1 tablespoon minced canned chipotle chile in adobo sauce |
| 3 tablespoons chile powder | 2 bay leaves |
| 4 teaspoons mustard seeds | 28-ounce can whole tomatoes, drained and cut into ½-inch pieces |
| 1 tablespoon ground cumin | 2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro |
| 1 tablespoon dried oregano | Salt, pepper |
| 2½ cups vegetable | |

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add onions, bell peppers, jalapeños, garlic, chile powder, mustard seeds, cumin and oregano, and cook until vegetables are softened and lightly browned, 8-10 minutes. Stir in 1 cup broth, scraping up any browned bits; transfer to slow cooker.

2. Stir water, beans, mushrooms, remaining broth, chipotles and bay leaves into slow cooker. Cover and cook until beans are tender, 9-11 hours on low or 5-7 hours on high.

3. Discard bay leaves. Transfer 1 cup cooked beans to a bowl and mash smooth with a potato masher. Stir mashed beans and tomatoes into chili and let sit until heated through, about 5 minutes. Stir in cilantro, season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

— "Slow Cooker Revolution"
(America's Test Kitchen, 2011)