

EPISODE 812: "Fingerlings Crossed"

COMPETITOR: George Rodrigues

DISH: Chili

WINNER: George Rodrigues

GEORGE RODRIGUES'S LAMB & CHORIZO CHILI

with Oaxaca Cheese

SERVES 6 TO 8

2 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil

1 large Spanish onion,
finely diced

5 garlic cloves, finely chopped

2 pounds ground lamb shoulder

1 pound Spanish chorizo,
finely diced

1 (28-ounce) can tomato sauce

2 cups Light Chicken Stock
(page 233) or store-bought
low-sodium chicken stock
or broth

1 heaping tablespoon
tomato paste

1 (15.5-ounce) can black beans,
rinsed and drained

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon clover honey

1 tablespoon finely chopped
fresh thyme leaves

Kosher salt and freshly
ground black pepper

8 ounces Oaxaca cheese,
coarsely grated

Yellow corn tortilla chips

2 jalapeños, finely sliced

½ cup chopped fresh
cilantro leaves

"Competing against one of the most famous chefs in America was a highlight of my career. Prior to this unforgettable experience, I had never been on TV, especially in a cooking competition, but I knew how hard it was to beat Bobby Flay, who is such a pillar in the American food world. After the first round, I felt slightly more confident, but still, the weight of his accolades and accomplishments as a chef made me worry about my chances of winning. Once the round started, I realized I was in my element—I regained my confidence to take him down and started cooking with all my heart. I chose chili as the surprise dish, fully knowing it was the type of food that Chef Flay had more experience with, because I wanted to not only compete but have him cooking at his best. Winning was a surreal and incredible experience, a feeling that I can still remember to this date. And gaining his respect and bragging rights was an awesome addition to my culinary skills." —GEORGE RODRIGUES

1. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over high heat until shimmering. Add the onion and cook until soft, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute longer.

2. Crumble the lamb into the pan, add the chorizo, and cook, stirring often, until lightly golden brown, about 5 minutes. Add the tomato sauce, stock, and tomato paste and bring to a boil. Stir in the beans, mustard, honey, and thyme. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid thickens and the lamb is tender, about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

3. Ladle into bowls and garnish with the cheese, a few chips, the jalapeño, and the cilantro.