

ZYDEGUMBO

This recipe was developed for the 2010 Tausworthe Winter Holiday Festival, described earlier in this work. I call it Zydegumbo¹ to instill a zydeco musical mind set to accompany its consumption. Also because it contains *les haricots vert* (i.e., green beans) instead of okra in vitro.

Zydegumbo was inspired by an episode I saw of Iron Chef Bobby Flay's TV series *Throwdown*, in which the challenge was to make the world's best New Orleans *seafood* gumbo. I didn't want a *seafood* gumbo, but I did like some of the techniques and ingredients that he used. This recipe is the outcome of my endeavor.

The treatment of the okra is completely different than you will find in New Orleans gumbos, and, if I may say so, it's a refreshing change from the usually gooey texture of the stew. For good measure, I used Emeril Lagasse's gumbo recipe as a preparation guide.

The word gumbo means *okra* in Bantu, I am told. The Creole word file (ground sassafras powder) in Choctaw is *kombo*. So just what makes an authentic gumbo is unclear. But in Louisiana, it consists primarily of a strong stock, meat or shellfish, a thickener, and the vegetable "holy trinity" of celery, bell peppers, and onion. It is traditionally served over rice. I generally don't partake of rice myself because of its high carbohydrate content.

Gumbos are often categorized by the type of thickener they contain: okra, filé (pronounced fee-lay) powder, or roux (pronounced roo). Purists say that only one of these should be used in any one preparation. Not being a purist, I usually combine all three (as the mood strikes me) in mine. Here, the okra appears as a garnish.

Trying to observe my culinary guidelines

¹It is not to be confused with the Zydeco Gumbo found at Mulate's Restaurant in New Orleans, which is much thinner and contains much less meat.

given earlier, I have reduced the fat, alt, and carb counts to the minimum consistent with what one could still honestly call a *good* gumbo.

The Meats

- 1 oz olive oil
- 2 lbs chicken thighs, skin and bone removed and in bite-sized pieces
- 2 lbs andouille sausage, sliced in ½" cubes
- 2 lbs fresh shrimp, peeled and deveined, cut in ½" pieces

The Holy Trinity

- 2 cups diced onions
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 cup diced green bell pepper

The Veggies

- 1 tbsp finely chopped garlic
- 1 lb green beans, French cut
- ½ lb large shiitake mushrooms, roughly cut
- 2 large carrots, diced ½"

Quick Roux

- 8 tsp gravy flour
- 4 tsp browning sauce

The Stock

- 2 quarts low sodium chicken stock²
- 1 (15-oz) can diced tomatoes
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbsp low-sodium Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tsp yeast extract (e.g. Marmite® or Vegemite®)
- ½ tsp Tabasco® sauce
- ¼ tsp ground cayenne chile

²Made using the saved skin and bones of chickens or parts thereof which you have deboned in previous preparations.

“salt” to taste

¾ tsp freshly ground black pepper

½ cup coarsely chopped parsley leaves

2 tbs chopped fresh thyme leaves

The Garnish

filé powder, to taste

1 cup green onion tops, chopped

**1 lb okra, cap removed, sliced into ½”
pieces and breaded using egg white,
corn meal, cornstarch, flour**

1 lb crawfish, steamed, in the shell

2 cups steamed rice

Place the chicken and sausage in an olive oiled oven pan, and place the trinity ingredients in another. Drizzle a little olive oil over both and bake them at 350°F for about 30 minutes, turning and stirring, until the chicken has browned and reached an internal temperature of at least 165°F. Remove both from the oven and add the vegetables to the trinity pan. Return the vegetable pan to the oven for about 10 minutes. Remove it and set both aside while making the stock.

Put the flour and browning sauce into a small bowl, add a little water, stock, or wine, and mix well to remove lumps. Put the chicken stock, bay leaves, low-sodium Worcestershire, Tabasco[®], cayenne, “salt”, and pepper into a large stock pot, add the roux, bring it to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until the liquid is thickened and slightly reduced, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, moisten the cut okra in egg white and toss in equal parts of corn meal, cornstarch, and flour, to coat each piece separately. Deep-fry at 360°F for about 3 minutes, or until golden. Alternately, spray with oil and bake at 350°F for about 20 to 30 minutes until browned.

Add the cooked meats and vegetables to the stock pot, bring to a simmer, and let cook for about 5 minutes until the vegetables have

softened *al dente*. stir in parsley and thyme. Simmer another 5 minutes. Taste and adjust seasonings, if necessary. Remove bay leaves. Add the raw shrimp, bring back the simmer, and cook only long enough to make them opaque and pink, about 3 minutes.

Ladle gumbo into soup bowls and top with steamed rice, fried okra, chopped scallions, and a few crawfish. Pass filé at the table for guests to thicken as desired. Also pass Louisiana Brand[®] and Tabasco[®] hot sauces to guests.

Makes about 15 servings.