

May 5 is fiesta time in Mexico. To celebrate, we've cooked up a hearty chili, then turned it into a party fare by adding a cornmeal layer and a garnish of cut-up veggies.

Prep time: 30 minutes plus cooling

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Degree of difficulty: easy

CORNMEAL LAYER

1 1/2 cups yellow cornmeal
1 teaspoon salt
4 cups cold water
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

5 1/2 cups Double-Header Chili (recipe follows), heated

TOPPINGS

1 container (8 oz.) sour cream
2 cups shredded Romaine or iceberg lettuce
2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
2 plum tomatoes, diced
2 green onions, sliced
1/2 ripe avocado, diced
1/2 cup pitted sliced ripe olives

1. Make Cornmeal Layer: Whisk cornmeal, salt and water together in large saucepan. Bring to boil over medium-high heat, whisking constantly. Cook until thickened, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in butter and cheese until melted.

2. Immediately pour cornmeal mixture into shallow 3-quart casserole. Cool until firm, 30 minutes. (Can be made ahead. Cover and refrigerate chili and cornmeal layers separately.) Heat oven to 375 degrees. Spread top of casserole with chili. Cover and bake 25 minutes (1 hour if refrigerated) or until heated through. Garnish with toppings. Makes 8 servings.

PER SERVING

Calories 545

Total Fat 31 g

Cholesterol 124 mg

Sodium 1,093 mg

Carbohydrates 33 g

Protein 34 g