

refrigerator the night before. This trick worked perfectly. The cold ingredients bought us the time to leave the chicken in the slow cooker for the span of a workday and now the chicken was perfectly cooked after eight hours in a slow cooker.

But we still needed to work on the flavor of the stew. We wanted it to have a spicy kick, but we didn't want it to be overwhelmingly hot. Smoky canned chipotle chiles added just the right level of heat and kept their kick for the long haul. As for the chorizo, we tried sautéing it with the onion and garlic, but found it really wasn't necessary—just adding it to the stew worked fine.

We also wanted black beans and corn in our stew. We tried dried black beans first, assuming that they would be fine here, as they were in our Black Bean Soup (page 125). As it turned out, they were actually a huge problem—their black pigment turned the chicken an unsightly gray color. That prompted us to go with canned black beans, which we simply stirred in along with the corn at the end of the cooking time. To give the stew a bit more body, we added instant tapioca rather than cornstarch or flour. It could be added at the onset of cooking time, which made it a convenient choice. For a final hit of brightness and flavor, we added fresh cilantro right before serving, stirring it into the pot.

Spicy Slow-Cooker Chicken and Chorizo Stew

SERVES 4 TO 6

Be sure to use chicken broth and tomatoes that have been refrigerated overnight or the stew will cook too fast. For a mild flavor, use the lower amount of chipotle chiles; for a spicy flavor, use the higher amount of chipotle. This thick stew is great on its own, but is also good served over rice, with tortillas, or with a crusty loaf of bread.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 medium onions, minced
- 8 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about 8 teaspoons)
- Salt

- 3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth, chilled
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained and chilled
- 8 ounces chorizo, cut into ½-inch chunks
- ¼ cup Minute tapioca
- 1–3 tablespoons minced chipotle chile in adobo sauce
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 cups frozen corn, thawed
- 1 (14-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup minced fresh cilantro leaves
- Ground black pepper

1. Heat the oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering but not smoking. Add the onions, garlic, and ¼ teaspoon salt and cook until the onions are softened and lightly browned, 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Transfer the onion mixture to the slow cooker insert and stir in the chicken, broth, tomatoes, chorizo, tapioca, chipotles, and sugar until evenly combined. Cover and cook on low until the chicken is tender, 7 to 9 hours. (Alternatively, cover and cook on high for 4 to 5 hours.)

3. Gently tilt the slow cooker insert and degrease as much fat as possible off the surface of the stew using a large flat spoon. Stir in the corn, beans, and cilantro and let stand until the corn and beans are heated through, about 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

PREP-AHEAD TIPS

You can store all the ingredients below together with the exception of the chicken, which must be refrigerated separately.

- Cook the onion mixture as described in step 1, then transfer it to an airtight container and refrigerate.
- Trim the chicken and refrigerate.
- Refrigerate the broth.
- Drain and refrigerate the tomatoes.
- Drain and rinse the beans.