



## BITE by BITE

Conquering My Culinary  
Bucket List One Dish at a Time

By Emily Banks Wooten

*"If more of us valued food and cheer  
and song above hoarded gold, it  
would be a merrier world."*

- J.R.R. TOLKIEN

## Welcoming cold weather with big pot of white chili

**W**hat are your thoughts on white bean chicken chili? I guess I've heard of it most of my adult life, but try as I might, I don't ever remember eating it. And I know I've never made it before. That all changed recently, however.

I was perusing the Internet one day when I ran across a picture of white bean chicken chili that looked so good that I couldn't get it out of my head. Seriously. Weeks went by and I just couldn't quit thinking about it. So one day when I had some time, I looked up a bunch of recipes for it to compare them.

Generally speaking, if I'm going to attempt something I've never cooked before and don't have a specific recipe from someone, I'll go online and look at several different recipes, comparing ingredients, cook times and such. Another thing I do that I highly recommend, is read the reviews. They can be very telling. For example, when I was looking for white bean chicken chili, the first three that came up had 5 stars, 4.5 stars and 4.6 stars respectively. That's pretty close so I looked at the ingredients of all three and selected the one that sounded the most appealing to me. It was the 5-star one. I then read the reviews. There were 429 in all. No, I didn't read all 429, probably just a dozen or so. What caught my eye immediately, however, was that two separate reviewers said they liked it so much that they fixed it twice in one week. Wow, I thought, that's really saying something.

The recent cold snap we've enjoyed provided the perfect opportunity to make this. It came together easily and we all three enjoyed it. In fact, Hubby even said it's one that we need to keep in the rotation. (Although he did say he thought it could use a little more heat—spice heat, not fire heat). That's easy enough to remedy. It's one of those recipes that's easily tweaked to make it your own by adding, or subtracting, a variety of components.

*"Welcome sweet  
November, the season of senses and  
my favorite month of all."*

— GREGORY F. LENZ



*"You can't just eat good food. You've got to talk about it too. And you've got to talk about it to somebody who understands that kind of food."*

— KURT VONNEGUT

## White Bean Chicken Chili

From [cookingclassy.com](http://cookingclassy.com)

- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 2 14.5-oz. cans low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 7-oz. can diced green chilies
- 1 ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 8-oz. Brick of Neufchatel cheese, cut into small cubes
- 1 ¼ cup frozen or fresh corn
- 2 15-oz. cans cannellini beans
- 2 ½ cups shredded cooked rotisserie or left-over chicken
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for serving
- Tortilla chips or strips, Monterey Jack cheese, sliced avocado for serving, optional

- Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and sauté for 4 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for 30 seconds.

- Add chicken broth, green chilies, cumin, paprika, oregano, coriander, cayenne pepper and salt and pepper to taste. Bring mixture just to a boil then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 15 minutes.

- Drain and rinse beans in a fine mesh strainer or colander then measure out 1 cup. Set whole beans aside, transfer 1 cup beans to a food processor along with ¼ cup broth from soup and puree until nearly smooth.

- Add Neufchatel cheese to soup along with corn, whole beans and pu-

reed beans and stir well. Simmer 5-10 minutes longer.

- Stir in chicken, fresh lime juice and cilantro. Serve with Monterey Jack cheese, more cilantro, avocado slices and tortilla chips if desired.

### My Notes:

— If you go to the website and read the recipe creator's notes you'll find that she originally used raw chicken that she cooked in the soup but that she eventually started using rotisserie chicken because it was easier, quicker and kept the chicken from drying out. What I did is something that I've been doing for years for anything that calls for shredded chicken. I buy a package of split chicken breasts (skin on, with rib meat). I coat both sides in olive oil and generously season with fresh ground black pepper and kosher salt and put in a 350-degree oven on a foil-lined baking sheet. Depending on the size of the breasts, I leave them in for 50-60 minutes. After allowing them time to cool off to the touch, I then peel the skin off, remove the bones and cartilage and tear/shred the chicken into pieces. Easy peasy.

— As Hubby wants it hotter, I'll probably increase the amount of cayenne pepper next time, or maybe add some Tabasco or Louisiana Hot Sauce.

— Neufchatel is found next to the cream cheese in the grocery store. You may use cream cheese if you prefer. Neufchated has a lower fat content however.

— I used frozen corn.

— This doesn't make a lot. Hubby had a bowl, daughter had a bowl and I had two bowls. There was enough left for one other bowl. In other words, if you're feeding more than three, I'd recommend doubling the recipe.

— I made this in an enamel-coated cast iron Dutch oven.

