

Down-Home Chicken Gumbo

Serves 6

❖ **Can Be Halved**
(see Tips, below)

Tips

If you are halving this recipe, be sure to use a small (2 to 3½ quart) slow cooker.

The quantity of Cajun seasoning and whether you add cayenne depend upon how hot your chorizo is. If you're in doubt, err on the side of caution. You can always pass hot pepper sauce at the table.

Andouille, a spicy smoked pork sausage used in Cajun cooking, is traditionally used in gumbo. If you can find uncooked andouille, by all means use it here. However, most andouille is precooked and heavily smoked, which wouldn't work in this recipe.

Okra is a great thickener for soups but becomes unpleasantly sticky when overcooked. Choose young okra pods 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 cm) long that don't feel sticky to the touch, which means they are ripe. Gently scrub the pods, cut off the top and tail and slice.

Make Ahead

Complete Step 1. Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days. When you're ready to cook, complete the recipe.

This is a much more delicious version of the chicken gumbo soup I enjoyed as a child, which, I'm sorry to say, came out of a can. Despite the difference in quality, it evokes an abundance of pleasant food memories — I could still enjoy it almost every day of the week.

• Medium to large (4 to 5 quart) slow cooker

1 tbsp	olive oil	15 mL
8 oz	fresh chorizo sausage, removed from casings (see Tips, left)	250 g
2	onions, finely chopped	2
4	stalks celery, diced	4
4	cloves garlic, minced	4
1 to 2 tsp	Cajun seasoning (see Tips, left)	5 to 10 mL
1 tsp	salt	5 mL
1 tsp	cracked black peppercorns	5 mL
1	bay leaf	1
¼ cup	short-grain brown rice (see Tips, page 86)	60 mL
2 tbsp	tomato paste	30 mL
1	can (14 oz/398 mL) diced tomatoes, with juice	1
4 cups	chicken stock	1 L
1 lb	skinless boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces	500 g
2 cups	sliced okra (¼ inch/0.5 cm) (see Tips, left)	500 mL
1	red bell pepper, seeded and diced	1
¼ tsp	cayenne pepper, optional (see Tips, left)	1 mL
	Finley chopped green onions, for garnish	

1. In a skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add sausage, onions and celery and cook, stirring, until sausage is cooked through, about 7 minutes. Add garlic, Cajun seasoning to taste, salt, peppercorns and bay leaf and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add rice and toss until coated. Stir in tomato paste. Add tomatoes with juice and bring to a boil.
2. Transfer to slow cooker stoneware. Stir in stock and chicken. Cover and cook on Low for 5 hours or on High for 2½ hours, until hot and bubbly. Stir in okra, bell pepper and cayenne. Cover and cook on High for 20 minutes, until okra is tender. Remove and discard bay leaf. Garnish with green onions.

