



Aji de Gallina (Peruvian Chicken Stew)

SERVES 8-10

One of the most classic Peruvian dishes is Aji de Gallina, a rich chicken stew blended with nuts and aji Amarillo. It appeared on menus all over Lima, and nearly every Peruvian cook had her recipe, claiming it to be the best.

Legend says it originated in the 14th century when the conquistadors' enslaved people mixed leftover chicken with sugar and almonds for a sweet treat. Afterward, Peruvian chiles called aji Amarillo were added for extra color and heat. The dish then became common in taverns and is now one of Peru's most prized meals.

I source my aji Amarillo chiles in the freezer section of my international grocery store. But you can substitute a jar of aji Amarillo paste if preferred.

INGREDIENTS

Chicken and Broth:

1 whole chicken
1 onion, quartered
2 carrots
2 stalks celery
1 tablespoon kosher salt

2 stalks celery, chopped
1 onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
4 slices white bread, crusts removed
1 (14-ounce) can evaporated milk
1/2 cup walnuts, toasted and roughly chopped, plus 1 tablespoon for garnish
3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Cooked medium- or long-grain rice, for serving
2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced, for garnish
10 black olives, sliced, for garnish

Stew:

3 aji amarillo chiles (fresh or frozen) (or
1/3 cup aji amarillo paste from a jar)
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 carrots, chopped

PROCESS:

Make the chicken and broth: In a large stockpot, combine the chicken, quartered onion, carrots, celery, and salt. Cover with water and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer for 1 1/2 hours. Remove the chicken and strain the broth into a large bowl. Discard the vegetables. Let the chicken cool enough that you can pull the meat off the bones, into bite-sized pieces. Discard the skin and bones. Reserve the chicken and broth.

Make the stew: In a small saucepan, bring 2 cups water to a boil,



add the aji amarillo chiles, and simmer until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain and remove the stems and seeds. Transfer to a food processor and blend until smooth. Set aside. (Alternatively, use aji amarillo paste from a jar.)

Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the chopped carrots, celery, and chopped onion and cook until tender, about 12 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Place the bread in a bowl, add 1/2 cup reserved chicken broth, and let sit for 1 minute. Break up the bread with a fork until smooth. Add the mashed bread to the vegetable mixture along with the chile puree. Add 3 cups reserved chicken broth, all the pulled chicken, and the evaporated milk and stir until combined, adding salt to taste. Bring to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes, until the liquid is partially evaporated, and the stew has thickened. Stir in the walnuts and Parmesan. Serve over rice and garnish with hard-boiled eggs, black olives, and additional walnuts.