

CONTINENTAL COOKBOOK

By Tammy Buchanan

Chef John “J” Hemmer

KNOWN BY FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COLLEAGUES simply as “J,” Chef John Hemmer is a member of Continental Airlines’ Congress of Chefs and director of sales and onboard services in the United States for Cuisine Solutions Inc., one of Continental’s largest and longest-standing food service vendor partners. With an impressive 37 years in the culinary industry, the midwesterner recognized his passion for gastronomy at an early age while working in local restaurants and bars and subsequently attended the Culinary Institute of America in New York. After graduating, Hemmer quickly became executive chef at the four-star Stouffer Concourse Hotel in St. Louis. Later he took on the challenge as executive chef for Dobbs International Services/ Gate-Gourmet, where he designed, developed, and implemented menus for airlines worldwide. Today, Chef Hemmer’s energetic attitude and contagious enthusiasm make him an instrumental player at Cuisine Solutions and within our Congress of Chefs. We spoke with the avid football fan and asked for his favorite recipe.

Q: If you weren’t a chef, what profession would you have chosen?

A: Rock star.

Q: What food reminds you of childhood?

A: White fish, fresh from Lake Michigan, cooked on alder planks.

Q: What is your favorite food indulgence?

A: Frozen custard with butter-roasted pecans from Leon’s Frozen Custard in Milwaukee.

Q: If we were to look in your fridge, what staples would we find?

A: Grade B maple syrup, green and red mole, Asian fish sauce, white wine, and mustard. Although not a staple, hummus too.

Q: What is your perfect meal?

A: Anything prepared fresh at any campground anywhere on the Colorado plateau.

Q: What is a highlight of your culinary career?

A: When I met my wife, Cathy, while working at a German club in Milwaukee. During college, she worked as a banquet waitress, and when she walked into the kitchen for the first time, I knew I was going to marry her. That was in 1974, and we are still cooking!

Q: When you’re not cooking, what are your favorite pastimes?

A: Triathlons. If I’m not working, I’m either training or racing!



Great Northern Chili

Ingredients

- 1 lb. dry white great northern beans
- 7 cups chicken broth
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 1 large onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 tsp. ground white pepper
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tbsp. oregano
- 1½ tbsp. cumin
- ¼ tsp. ground clove
- 7 oz. green chilies, diced
- 5 cups cooked chicken breast, diced
- 1 tbsp. jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced

Instructions

1. Carefully pick over the beans, rinse, then soak covered in water for 24 hours.
2. Drain the beans. Combine them in a pot with 5¼ cups chicken broth, garlic, onion, white pepper, salt, oregano, cumin, and cloves. Simmer beans covered for 5 hours, stirring occasionally until beans are tender.
3. Stir in green chilies, chicken, and remaining chicken broth; simmer for 1 hour.
4. Add jalapeño.
5. To plate chili, serve with shredded Monterey jack cheese, tortilla chips, sour cream, chopped cilantro, diced avocado, and salsa. Serves 8.

Number of U.S. airlines other than Continental that operate their own catering kitchens