



KAREN CROUSE NAPA VALLEY: A SEASON *to* RESTORE

Mustard paints the Napa Valley floor in bold yellow each winter, a striking contrast to bare vines and rain darkened hillsides. While the landscape looks alive with color, nature is fully focused on restoration, shifting into dormancy and preparing for the growing season ahead. Living here has taught me to do the same.

This is the season I return to meals that are slow cooked. Steam fogs the windows as a simmer turns to a boil, and the kitchen fills with the scents of comfort foods like bones braising, fragrant herbs, and vegetables sautéing. One of the basics I rely on is crock pot chicken stock, a recipe I share on my Karen Crouse Napa Valley website. For me, it's the foundation for soups, stews, and the white chicken chili featured here.

Entertaining looks different this time of year. I keep gatherings simple. Weekends without plans, evenings at home, get togethers that don't need an occasion. One pot on the stove, one good bottle opened, and candlelight instead of centerpieces. It is a season for meaningful conversations with close friends and family.

After the holidays, the pace slows, the air chills, and there's opportunity for reflection and care. I reach for cozy sweaters and return to familiar rituals, like making bath salts, lightly scented and meant to be used and shared.

Since I spend more time at home during these months, I tend to take on organizing tasks. Through my "What's in My..." series, I share my must-haves, little

collections of tools and treasures that make daily life easier. From what's in my utility drawer to what I keep stocked in my wine box and on my bar cart, they save me time every day, and I know you'll find them helpful too.

Napa Valley has been my home for more than 35 years. For me, life here is about gatherings shaped by attention to even the smallest details. I enjoy inviting you behind the scenes of our Mount Veeder vineyard and farmhouse to share the way I cook, decorate, and entertain. I'm glad you're here.

Cheers,

Karen



"My mission is to inspire, entertain, and have fun with you—while always setting you up for success."

Karen Crouse

WINTER WARMTH

Winter has a way of pulling me into the kitchen, not for anything elaborate, but for something that can simmer while the day unfolds. This white chicken chili checks that box and is hearty in the way winter meals should be.

Once it's on the stove, it just simmers. The chicken softens, the beans melt into the broth, and the kitchen starts to smell like dinner is handled. Perfect for this time of year.

I usually make a pot so there's enough for a few meals. It works as an easy lunch, a relaxed dinner, or something warm to set out when friends stop by. It's just as fitting for a Super Bowl afternoon as it is on a busy weeknight.

Comfort food should do more than fill you up. It should restore you a little, too. This one always does for me, and I hope it finds its way to your table this winter.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.karencrousenapavalley.com

WHITE CHICKEN CHILI

Serves 4–6

INGREDIENTS:

1 ½ lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 yellow onion, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 ½ tsp ground cumin
½ tsp ground coriander
¼ tsp white or black pepper
1 (4 oz) can mild green chiles
2 (15 oz) cans white beans, drained and rinsed
4 cups good-quality chicken stock
Kosher salt, to taste
Zest and juice of 1 lime

OPTIONAL TOPPINGS:

Crème fraîche, chopped cilantro, sliced avocado, warm bread or tortilla chips

PREPARATION:

Season the chicken lightly with salt. In a heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, warm the olive oil over medium heat. Brown the chicken on both sides, then remove and set aside.

In the same pot, add the onion and cook until soft and translucent. Stir in the garlic, cumin, coriander, and pepper, cooking just until fragrant.

Add the green chiles, white beans, and chicken stock. Return the chicken to the pot, bring to a gentle simmer, cover, and cook for about 30 minutes, until the chicken is tender.

Remove the chicken, shred it, and return it to the pot. Finish with lime zest and juice. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed.

When I serve this, I like to set out a small toppings board with sliced avocado, cilantro, lime wedges, and crème fraîche, so everyone can finish their bowl just the way they like it.

Pair with a Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, pilsner, lager, or ginger beer and dig in.

