

Recipe for a Medical Student

1 cup red beans, soaked overnight and cooked
1 cup black beans, soaked overnight and cooked
1 cup green bell peppers cut up
2 onions, minced
2 zucchinis, sliced into rounds
2 cans of diced tomatoes
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon chili powder
A dash allspice

1. Heat the oil over medium heat and add the cinnamon, allspice, chili powder, and garlic.

As you do so, notice how hungry you are. It's two days until the next big exam and six days after the last one. The meaty, rich fragrance wafts up from the pan as the spices brown and the garlic sizzles. The aroma is familiar to you, hot like desert sand and colorful lights strung across a summer night. Hear an off-tune guitar before you shut off the thought. Realize that you're not hungry, just empty.

2. Add the onions and bell peppers.

Saute until tender. This might take a while because of the volume, so do something else to distract yourself. In moments like this, "OneNote won't load up in time" is the only excuse you'll take for taking a break. Somehow, "My eyes can't follow these sentences" and "I can't concentrate on the letters" aren't good enough for you anymore. So open up Facebook instead. The Facebook Memories algorithm is merciless. It pulls up a status from four years ago, when you posted: "Don't just study- learn! We're here for knowledge, not grades. :)" It's probably karma that right now, you're barely hoping to recognize the jumbles of abbreviations for the exam Friday.

3. In a separate pan, sear the zucchini rounds on high heat. Add the zucchini to the rest of the ingredient.

Stir to combine, and the nutty brown glaze coats all the ingredients like peppery enamel. Don't think about how worn thin you are now, because this is nothing compared to what's next. That's how it's always been: undergrad classes shouldn't stress you out because medical school will be a lot worse. Medical school stress shouldn't wear you down because residency will be even more grueling. Residency shouldn't be that hard on you, because when you're a doctor it'll be even harder.

If you can't take it now, how are you going to survive later? Admitting that you're not well is an open declaration that something innate about you is not suited for the medical profession. It's not about appearing weak. It's about being told you can't do it.

4. Add two cans of tomatoes, juice and all. Bring to a boil.

The steam rolls over your face as you stare into the pot listlessly. You're weary, you're distracted, delirious. You're disheartened. But you've come this far already. Just a few more lectures, and then you've done enough, even you can't bring yourself to believe it. All this is just another part of a marathon of baby steps towards your goal. Everyone has something that keeps them going: dedication, pride, or love. For you, it's the latter, and even if it's a long road, at least you have your destination on the map.

5. Add beans. Turn heat to medium and allow to cook until liquid is reduced to half its original volume.

The chili is simmering down. It's a hearty dish, full of beans and vegetables, vitamins and minerals. Just smelling it, you absorb the goodness, the wholesomeness from the pot.

You're going to be okay.