Mexican Tripe Soup (Pancita/Menudo)

Put the feet and tripe in a large pot, and fill it with water. Boil for 10 minutes, then drain and rinse gently with cold water. Return the pieces to the pot and fill with enough water to cover everything by at least 1", about 12 cups total.

Bring everything to a boil and reduce heat to a simmer, and simmer for one hour. Be sure to scoop up any foam or fat that accumulates on the surface. After an hour, add the bay leaves and simmer until the feet just start to fall apart, about another hour. Add water as needed to keep the pieces fully submerged.

As the soup simmers, prepare the chili paste by placing the chiles in a small pot with about 1/2 cup of water, and bring to a boil. Once it starts boiling, remove the pot from the heat and let it sit for about thirty minutes. Once they are cool, blend the chiles with the onion and garlic, adding some of the water you boiled the chiles in if the paste gets too thick.

Once the pig’s feet are just starting to fall apart, add the chili paste (pour it through a strainer to catch any big chunks or seeds), oregano, and cilantro, and simmer for another 30 minutes. Next, fish the feet out and set them aside to cool while the soup simmers for another 30 minutes. Depending on whether you are using hominy or not, this is when you would add the hominy. Once the feet are cool, remove any pieces of meat you can find and return it to the soup. Discard the rest of the feet.

After the soup has simmered for an additional 30 minutes (three hours total – one hour with just the tripe/feet, one hour with the bay leaves, 30 mins with the chili paste, 30 mins without the feet), it’s ready to serve. Add salt and pepper to taste (probably about 1 tbsp salt and 1 tsp pepper), and add the lime juice. Serve with diced white onion and more dried oregano.

Many people like to refrigerate this soup overnight and reheat the next day, to allow the flavors to marry.