Chicken Tortilla Soup
Mary Herman • Brunswick, Cumberland County

"I grew up in a large Jewish family in Milwaukee. Every Sunday after Sunday school (yes, we called it that, not ‘religious,’ or ‘Hebrew’ school, because ‘Hebrew School’ was on TUESDAY, and two days a week was too much...) we gathered at my grandfather, Papa’s, home. He watched ‘Meet The Press,’ ‘Hallmark Hall of Fame,’ and other serious shows while kids played cards, games, and generally ran around. Often my grandmother made ‘Chicken in the Pot,’ for all of us.

Fast forward to today. Every Sunday afternoon, September through the Superbowl, is ‘Football Sunday.’ My husband, [Senator] Angus [King], and I gather with our grown kids and grandkids for games and dinner. I usually make football munchies and a soup. Chicken Tortilla Soup is my modern-day version, kinda, of Chicken in the Pot. It’s hearty and appeals to three generations!"

1 large onion, chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 to 4 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons oregano
2 teaspoons cumin
2 teaspoons chili powder
2 to 3 jalapenos, diced (optional)
28-ounce can diced tomatoes (I prefer fire-roasted)
6 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 can corn kernels, drained and rinsed
1 tablespoon lime juice, or more to taste
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 rotisserie (or home-roasted) chicken

For serving:
2 avocados, cubed
Grated cheddar or crumbled Mexican cojita cheese
Lime wedges
Chopped fresh cilantro
Crushed tortilla chips

In a large soup pot over medium heat, soften onion in olive oil, 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in garlic, oregano, cumin, and chili powder. Add jalapenos, if using.

Stir in canned tomatoes and chicken broth. Add black beans and corn. Stir in lime juice, salt and pepper, and adjust seasonings to taste. (You may want to add cinnamon and/or sugar—years ago a friend with Mediterranean ancestry taught me always to add cinnamon to tomato-based recipes.)

Simmer soup on the stove while you shred the chicken. (It’s prettier shredded, and I think it tastes better!) Add the chicken to the soup and keep tasting.

Before serving, arrange avocados, cheese, lime wedges, cilantro, and tortilla chips with a stack of bowls and spoons. Let each person make their own bowl!