

STOCKS AND BROTH

Broth is one of the great inventions of all time. It serves as an ingredient in all sorts of things, from stew to risotto, and in its own right a bowl of broth is the old-fashioned comfort food. Broth is good for babies and when you're down with an illness. A good bowl of broth will warm you in the winter, refresh you in the summer, and is perfect year-round if you're on a diet.

GOOD STOCK

If your stock resembles loosely congealed egg whites, you have stock that you can feel good about. The gelatin and protein in the bones and meat scraps causes the stock to congeal. This type of stock is the reason why chicken soup is prescribed for people who are sick. It's powerfully healthy food that is easily digested.

If your stock is firmer than egg white and resembles Jello, you have the really good stuff. It jiggles and wiggles, and keeps its shape. You have reaped the rewards of a labor of love, and you can be sure that anything you create with it will be full of flavor and nutrition.

STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Once your stock is completely chilled, you will be able to determine what the quality is and then you can portion it and freeze it completely. Take an ice cube tray that you don't use for cubes, and fill that with some stock. You can use frozen stock cubes for all kinds of sauces or to enhance bouillon cubes or canned broths. You can portion the stock into zipper freezer bags by the quart or by the cup or do a little of both. Get all the air out of the bags before you freeze them.

REMOVE THE FAT

One more thing you can do with your stock once it's chilled is get rid of any unwanted fat that is solidifying on the top to make your stock even more healthful. Strain the fat from the broth using a skimmer or gravy strainer, or refrigerate until the fat congeals and then just lift it off.

CLARIFYING STOCK

For each quart of stock, you will use one slightly beaten egg white and one crumpled egg shell. Have the stock at room temperature. In a cooking pot, stir the egg whites and egg shells into the stock. Put the pot on a simmering heat and very slowly, without stirring, bring the mixture just to a simmer. As the sediments coagulate with the egg whites, a thick scum will rise to the surface of the liquid. Don't succumb to the temptation of skimming the pot. Just push the scum aside so you can keep an eye on the simmer of the stock--anything close to a boil will disturb the clarifying process. Simmer for about 10-15 minutes, then carefully remove the pot from the heat and let stand for anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour. Collect the stock by just pushing the scum aside and ladle the stock through a sieve lined with a cheesecloth (old bed sheets can be recycled here) that has been dipped in hot water and wrung out. Let the stock cool to room temperature uncovered, then tightly close and refrigerate or freeze.



CHICKEN BROTH

3 ½ - 4 lbs. of the very cheapest chicken
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large carrot, scrubbed, cut in half
2 stalks of celery with leaves, cut in half
1 parsnip, peeled and cut in half
1 large onion, peeled and cut in half
1 small ripe tomato, quartered
1 tablespoon lemon juice
4 to 6 cloves of garlic
2 teaspoons dried thyme
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 bay leaves
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon rosemary, or
1 teaspoon sage, or
1 teaspoon dried cilantro
If using a whole chicken, cut it up. Wash chicken well. Remove any large hunks of fat. Heat the olive oil in a pressure cooker over medium-high heat. Brown the chicken lightly on all sides. Return the golden-browned chicken to the pan. Add the vegetables, seasonings and salt. Cover with cold water. Lock the lid in place and cook 30 minutes. Use the natural release. Remove chicken, discard skin, discard vegetables, debone and separate the light and dark meat into freezer containers for later use. Strain the fat from the broth using a skimmer or gravy strainer, or refrigerate until the fat congeals and then just lift it off. If the broth is too weak, you may reduce it by boiling rapidly, uncovered, and adjust seasonings to taste. When the flavor is satisfactory, allow to cool slightly. This broth is great for soups, gravy, sauces, or to add flavor to many dishes. If you won't use it within a day, freeze it in ice cube trays, then store the cubes in a zipper freezer bag.

GARLIC-PARSLEY STOCK

2 heads garlic
1 bunch cilantro or parsley, thoroughly rinsed
salt to taste
4 cups water
Place the water in the cooker and begin bringing to the boil as you remove the paper like covering from garlic bulbs. Break off the individual cloves, do not peel. Set the cloves and the medium bunch parsley in the water. Lock the lid in place and cook for 10 minutes. Allow the pressure to come down naturally or use a quick-release method. Allow the stock to cool slightly. Pour the stock through a strainer and then one or more storage containers. Discard the parsley. If you wish, you may squeeze the garlic out of the skins and mash or puree it. Stir the mashed garlic into the stock to thicken it. Alternatively, use the garlic puree as a spread for bread. Add salt to taste.

VEGETABLE STOCK

2 quarts water
2 large onions, quartered
2 large garlic cloves
3 large carrots, cut into chunks
3 large celery ribs, in large chunks
¼ cup dried sliced porcini mushrooms
2 large bay leaves
1 tablespoon minced garlic
20 fresh parsley sprigs or cilantro
8 cups assorted vegetables, coarsely chopped
asparagus stalks, broccoli stems, leek greens,
wilted salad greens and peeled winter squash,
turnips, parsnips, rutabagas
Add all the ingredients to the pot. Add cold water to the maximum fill line, or 2/3 filled. Lock the lid in place and cook 20 minutes. Use the natural-release method. Let the stock cool, strain the stock, pressing the vegetables against the side of the strainer with a large spoon to extract all the liquid. Adjust seasoning to taste.

BASIC BEEF BROTH

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 lbs meaty beef shanks
2 onions, quartered
2 ribs celery with leaves, coarsely chopped
2 carrots, quartered
4 cloves garlic, mashed
1 small bunch parsley
Salt to taste
1/2 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
Heat the oil in the pressure cooker, brown the meat on both sides. Add remaining ingredients and cover with 2 quarts of water. Lock the lid in place and cook for 45 minutes. Use the natural release method. Strain broth through a fine sieve or several layers of cheesecloth in a colander. Season to taste and use as a base for other recipes, or freeze in portions for later use.

GRANNY'S SCOTCH BROTH

1/4 cup oil
2 lbs lamb neck bones
2 turnips, scrubbed, cut in half
2 rutabagas, scrubbed, cut in half
2 large carrots, scrubbed, cut in quarters
2 whole leeks, washed, cut lengthwise
1 cup packed parsley stems and leaves
1 tablespoon minced garlic
Salt and pepper
Put all the ingredients in the cooker
Heat the oil in the cooker and brown the meat to a dark brown color. Cover with 1 quart cold water. Lock the lid in place and cook 45 minutes. Use the natural release method. Remove meat, debone, discard vegetables, meat can go into freezer containers for later use, but there won't be a lot of flavor left so combine with fresh meats of use a flavorful base. Strain the fat from the broth using a skimmer or gravy

strainer, or refrigerate until the fat congeals and then just lift it off.

FABULOUSLY RICH BROTH

2-4 tablespoon oil
2 lbs beef, shanks, short plate, short ribs, or brisket.
1 lb large beef marrow bones
1 lbs cheap chicken parts, necks, back, wings
2 stalks celery with leaves, cut in 3" pieces
1 large carrot coarsely shredded
1 large can tomatoes and juice
1 bunch of parsley
1 large onion, coarsely chopped
A bunch of basil, if it's in season
6 whole pepper corns
1 tablespoon minced garlic
2 bay leaves
2 teaspoons dried basil
2 teaspoons dried thyme
2 cups red wine or 1 bottle of beer
Heat the oil in the cooker and brown the meat to a good color on all sides. Add all remaining ingredients. Cover with enough water to reach the 2/3 maximum volume of you cooker. Lock the lid in place and cook 50 minutes. Use the natural release method. Strain the broth, let it cool, and skim the fat that rises to the surface (the best way to do this is to chill the broth). Salt to taste. Use the broth to make soups or serve it by itself. Remove meat, debone, discard vegetables, meat can go into freezer containers for later use, or shred the meat for BBQ sandwiches. Freeze the broth or serve as is.

