

Recipe for a great homemade stock

If you're not a big fan of precise recipes when there is no need for them, and you favor simplicity, stock making may become a habit for you because it's easy, versatile, nourishing, and delicious.

- Simply place a big bunch of bones in a crock-pot or a big stockpot, cover them with cold water and set the temperature on low heat so it doesn't do much more than simmer.
- Add 2 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar to the cold water to help draw the nutrients from the bones.
- You can roast your beef bones beforehand for 25-30 minutes at about 375°F (190°C) and then use them to make your stock. This technique makes a much darker stock with a roasted flavor.
- You can easily mix things up and use bones from different animals all in the same pot.

A lot of people will tell you to skim the froth that forms at the surface of a stock as it cooks, but it's harmless. Skimming the foam or "scum" as it's sometimes called, is simply a matter of culinary preference and is done to create a clear broth or stock. If you don't mind the way it looks, leave it and all the goodness that it might contain. People also like to remove the congealed fat that forms at the top when the stock is cooled. You can leave it in or pull it off, whichever you prefer. If you're eating grass fed and pastured animals, the fat will be healthy for you.

Time frame for cooking the stock

Allow around 4 hours for chicken stock and a minimum of 6 hours for other, tougher bones. You can easily let it go for much longer if you want to extract more taste and nutrients from the bones, as much as 48 hours. Just make sure you add water as it evaporates and continue drawing out the concentration.

Chicken bones are more fragile and after 24 hours there won't be much left.

Seasoning the stock

Seasoning should be done near the end of the cook time or you can wait to season your stock as you use it in recipes.

- Add fresh herbs and spices in the last 10 minutes.
- Dried herbs and spices or spice powders can be added during the final hour.
- Vegetables can be added according to their size, giving them enough time to cook.

If you're not skilled with seasonings, it's best to experiment with a small amount before seasoning the entire pot. You'll discover different flavors that you may enjoy for a variety of dishes.

- An important rule when it comes to stock making is don't add any salt. If you plan to reduce it to make soups or sauces, the salt concentration can easily

become too high if you add it at the beginning. Only add salt to the end product you make with the stock, not to the stock itself.

French people always come up with great names when it comes to cooking.

Use *mirepoix* for sauces and *bouquet garni* for soups and stews.

- A *mirepoix* is usually a mixture of diced carrots, celery and onions. It's used everywhere in French cuisine to flavor liquids because those vegetables impart great taste. Add them only at the end if you're going for a 24 or 48 hour cooking period or they'll disintegrate too much. They can be discarded afterwards because all the flavor and nutrients will be in the liquid.
- A *bouquet garni* is a mixture of sturdy herbs like thyme, rosemary and bay leaves. They can be tied together, put in a pouch or randomly placed in the liquid. You can also add fresh peppercorns for a spicier
- Try turmeric or fenugreek powder for soups and straight broth, oregano, ground fennel seeds, or even a little nutmeg for stews and gravies.

Storing your stock

After your stock is cooked, it's a good idea to cool it quickly because bacteria will multiply rapidly.

Putting the hot pot directly into the refrigerator will raise the refrigerator temperature to unsafe levels for food. Instead, take the whole pot and put it in a sink filled with cold water.

After it has been cooled, separate what you plan to use right away and put it in the refrigerator. It will keep for about a week. Use the smell test. If it smells good, it should be fine. If you're not sure, re-boil it to kill any bacteria.

Store the rest in the freezer. If you've made a very large pot, it's convenient to store the remainder in one cup portions so you can defrost them as needed.

Get inspired

Once you've made this delicious liquid, you may find yourself using it in all kinds of recipes including soups, stews, meatloaf, stuffed mushroom fillings, meat pies, and even desserts. Here are some suggestions to help you get creative.