

# investing in stocks

Prepare today for your soup- and stew-making future with simple recipes for chicken, beef and vegetable stocks.

By Cheryl Morrison

**V**egetable, chicken and beef stocks serve as the bases for innumerable soups, stews and sauces. You can make stocks at home that are tastier, more healthful and less expensive than most commercial brands. Some stocks must simmer for hours, but the active preparation time from start to stovetop takes only a few minutes.

## vegetable stock

Vegetable stocks require less simmering time than those that include meat. You can make a flavorful stock using only vegetables, garlic and a sachet of common herbs and spices. Vegetable stock can replace chicken stock to produce delicious risottos. As with all stocks, you can add or subtract ingredients and adjust their quantities to suit your taste buds. A meatless stock such as this one can provide the basis for countless other vegetarian and vegan dishes.

- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ tsp. fresh thyme leaves or ½ tsp. dried thyme
- 3 or 4 parsley sprigs
- 3 or 4 whole black peppercorns
- 1 whole clove
- 1 medium red or yellow onion, peeled
- 1 medium leek (including the white bulb and the green stem), rinsed thoroughly
- 1 rib of celery, leaves included
- 1 carrot, peeled
- half a tomato

- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 1 gallon cold water

**1** Tie the bay leaf, thyme, parsley, peppercorns and clove into a double layer of cheesecloth to make a sachet. Chop the onion, leek, celery, carrot and tomato.

**2** In a heavy-bottomed stockpot over medium heat, cook the oil. Lower the heat, add all of the vegetables and the garlic, cover, and cook for about five minutes or until the onions become translucent and a little soft but not browned.

**3** Pour the cold water over the vegetables, drop the vegetables and sachet of herbs into the pot, and turn the heat to high. When the stock reaches a boil, lower the heat, and simmer for 45 minutes.

**4** Remove the stock from the heat, strain it, and discard the solid ingredients.



## chicken stock

There are as many variations on chicken stock as there are cooks who make it. Some stock recipes use only chicken, vegetables and a few herbs, simmered slowly in water with a little salt and pepper. Others call for ginger, cloves or other flavorings.

Bones create the difference between a rich stock and a delicate broth — one that's made without bones — and the meat and bones can be cooked or fresh. Some cooks choose to use the leftover carcasses of roasted chickens, with meat scraps still clinging to the bones, which can keep in the freezer until ready to make stock. Others use fresh chicken, which needn't be young or tender, because the meat gets discarded. All that matters is flavor. You can experiment with variations on this basic recipe to develop a version that's all your own.

- 1 whole chicken, with bones
- 1 large carrot or 2 small ones
- 1 large onion with peel
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 3 celery stalks
- 1 bay leaf
- 10 whole peppercorns

- 1 gallon cold water
- salt to taste (optional)

**1** Cut the chicken into pieces; reserve the bones. Note that the chicken heart and gizzard are excellent for use in stocks. Set aside the liver for another purpose, though; stock made with liver can become murky and unappetizing.

**2** Wash but do not peel the carrot, and cut it into chunks. Quarter the unpeeled onion.

**3** In a large stockpot, heat the oil, add the chicken parts, and cook them for a few minutes to brown the skin. Add the remaining ingredients to the pot, and slowly bring the liquid to a boil.

**4** Turn the heat to low, and simmer the stock, skimming the foam from the surface every half-hour or so. Keep the stock simmering, uncovered, for at least 2½ or three hours — until the chicken is so thoroughly cooked that it falls from the bones and easily can be pulled apart with a fork. At this point, the flavor has been extracted.

**5** Strain the liquid, and discard the solid ingredients. Add salt to taste.

## beef stock

Roasting beef, bones and vegetables in the oven before combining them with liquid produces a rich stock with a deep brown color. The oven heat caramelizes the vegetables, adding flavor to the stock. You can use this stock as the basis for classic French onion soup as well as numerous dishes and sauces.

- 5 lb. meaty beef bones, preferably including some knuckle bones, with some marrow exposed
- 1 lb. chuck, flank or scraps
- 1 large onion, unpeeled
- 2 medium carrots
- olive oil as needed
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 celery stalk
- 3 unpeeled garlic cloves, crushed
- 6 fresh parsley sprigs
- 2 bay leaves
- 10 peppercorns
- 3 quarts cold water

**1** Preheat the oven to 400° Fahrenheit. Cut the meat into 2-inch chunks. Quarter the unpeeled onion, wash but do not peel the carrots, and cut the carrots and celery into 1-inch pieces. Rub the beef bones with olive oil — enough to coat the bones.

**2** Using a large pan, roast the bones, meat, onion and carrots in the oven for about 45 minutes, turning from time to time until they are brown. Transfer to a large stockpot.

**3** Heat the roasting pan on the stovetop over low heat, add hot water to the pan, and scrape it with a metal spatula to loosen browned meat that sticks to the bottom.

**4** Pour the liquid from the roasting pan, along with any bits of meat, into the stockpot.

**5** Add the celery, garlic, parsley, bay leaves and peppercorns to the stockpot with enough cold water to cover the bones. Slowly bring the liquid to a boil; then simmer, uncovered, for about five hours.

**6** Strain the liquid through a cheesecloth-lined sieve, and discard the solid ingredients, which by now will have imparted their flavor to the stock.

*Cheryl Morrison uses locally raised meats and vegetables to make stocks, soups and stews at her homes in Vermont and New York City.*



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## preserving stock: shelf versus freezer

Chicken, beef and vegetable stock will keep for many months when canned or frozen. Both preservation methods produce excellent results, and you will have home-made stock at the ready for weeks or months to come.

For both methods, start by refrigerating the stock until the fat rises and congeals, then skim the fat from the surface. If you choose to can the stock, reheat it while you sterilize your jars.

For canned stock, you must use a pressure canner. Follow the instructions for your particular canner and altitude. Unlike pickles, chutneys and acidic fruits and vegetables, stocks cannot be safely preserved with a boiling-water bath — the most common canning method.

Pressure canning your stock requires some time and trouble, but it offers these advantages over freezing:

- When you're ready to use the stock, you need only open a jar and add its contents to your dish. Thawing time isn't necessary.

- Canned stock requires no freezer space, and there's no danger of spoilage if the power goes out in your home.

Freezing stock requires only these simple steps once the fat is removed:

- Pour the stock into clean plastic containers, leaving about 1 inch of headroom, because the stock will expand as it freezes.

- Fasten the lids tightly to the containers, and stack the containers in the freezer.

Freezing stocks and other liquids in glass jars is not recommended, because jars are highly prone to breakage as liquid expands into the narrow areas at the tops of the jars.

You can use pint- and quart-sized containers for any kind of stock that you plan to use specifically in those quantities, but smaller containers often are handy if you require smaller amounts of stock for other purposes, such as making sauces or glazes.

Tip: If you freeze some stock in ice cube trays and then transfer the frozen stock cubes to a plastic bag, you can pull a cube from the bag when a recipe calls for just a tablespoon or two of stock. — C.M.



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