

Stock

Stock is a foundation of flavorful and wholesome cooking. Stock made from birds that have been smoke roasted over a charcoal or wood fire is sensational. Use stock in place of water when cooking grits, polenta, risotto, pasta sauces, and vegetables to increase flavor depth and complexity. These days, you can buy stock in cans at the grocery store. But you can do much better if you're going to be around the house a few hours after you roast your next bird.

Tools

Large, heavy stock pot big enough to hold the ingredients below plus a gallon or two of water. Stainless steel is good if it has a thick, heavy bottom to evenly distribute heat.

Enameled cast iron will work, too. Big carcass - big pot (and vice-versa).

Level-rimmed cup measure (i.e. one without a spout)

Fat/stock separator

Funnel with integral strainer (or cheesecloth)

Quart and pint freezer containers (like the ones that come with Chinese takeout soups) for storing/freezing the stock

Ingredients

Roast chicken, turkey, cornish game hen, duck, or pheasant carcass with some meat scraps left on it (remove and discard all skin and loose fat except for dark crunchy bits).

Liver, neck, and gizzard (if you reserved them before roasting bird)

Miscellaneous leftover vegetable trimmings such as cauliflower/cabbage/lettuce cores, carrot tops, woody asparagus ends (don't go overboard on these), onion greens, turnip greens, beet greens, etc. Folks who don't have chickens to feed save items like this in the refrigerator anticipating their next batch of stock.

2-3 medium onions, peeled and cut into approx 1/4" thick slices

A few sprigs (3-4" long) of fresh rosemary, oregano, sage, tarragon, thyme, and chives cut from your herb garden (go easy on the rosemary).

If no herb garden, one teaspoon of "Herbes de Bubba"

1-3 dried whole bay leaves (optional, or to taste)

10-15 whole peppercorns (optional, or to taste)

2-3 whole dried hot spice peppers like cayenne, bird, fish, etc. (optional, or to taste)

Method

Put all ingredients in stock pot.

Fill pot with water until carcass is well covered and vegetables and onions are floating. Cover, place on medium heat, and watch until simmer is reached (stock will steam when lid is removed; small bubbles will break sporadically in pot). Then cut back heat to maintain this condition. It's best if it doesn't boil.

After about thirty minutes, and occasionally thereafter, cut back the heat to stop the bubbles breaking and use the level-rimmed cup measure to skim any scum or fat that rises to the surface of the stock. Use the fat/stock separator to concentrate it. Discard scum and fat. Return stock to the pot.

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About two hours after you reached the original simmer, turn off the heat and let stock cool until warm, not steaming.
Skim scum and fat again, then refrigerate overnight in covered stock pot.
Next day, remove from refrigeration. Skim any scum or fat that have congealed on surface. Bring to a simmer once more, then let cool with the lid cracked until warm, not steaming.
Pour into freezer containers through funnel with integral strainer. Refrigerate immediately. Freeze containers you will not use within two days.

Comments

Stock is personal. Kind of like politics and religion. Each of us tastes things differently. Adjust herb, bay leaf, black pepper, and hot pepper proportions to suit your palate. Be creative with vegetable trimming additions. Eventually you'll find that your stock seasons your cooking for you.

We omit salt from this recipe because there is normally enough in a well-seasoned bird carcass to make a flavorful stock. If you think it needs salt, add a pinch or two of the Hey Bubba brand salt that strikes your fancy.

If you use dried herbs (Herbes de Bubba) rather than fresh herbs, they will come out of the stock with the fat when you skim. This is normal. The herbs will have already released their fragrance and flavor into the stock.

This recipe calls for overnight refrigeration and next-day reheat of the stock for convenience. If you're going to be awake and around for about six hours, omit the overnight refrigeration. Instead, simmer the stock for at least four hours, let cool, then package.

Frozen stock is best if used within three-to-six months.

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