

Besotted Gourmet



Chicken Stock

Ingredients:

5lbs. Chicken (Pick an inexpensive cut, like legs, or some markets package chicken bones and meat for stew)
2 Carrots, chopped
2 Stalks Celery, chopped
1 Onion, sliced in half and the layers separated
1 Leek, chopped
8 Peppercorns
Bouquet Garni consisting of 4 of the following: Parsley, Thyme, Marjoram, Rosemary, Sage*
3 Quarts Cold Water
1 Cup White Wine

Preparation:

Add all of the ingredients, except the wine and water to a large stock pot. Pour the water on top and bring to a boil.

Skim any scum that forms off the top of the pot, and lower the heat to medium-low. Partially cover and let simmer for 2 hours. (By the time the boiling has settled down to a simmer, you should see gurglings below the surface and the odd bubble pop, but not much more activity.)

Add the wine, and let the stock simmer for another 3 hours.

Once the simmering is done, remove the pot from the heat, and, with tongs, pick out and dispose of as much of the meat as possible.** Allow the rest of the stock to cool considerably on the counter or stove top for at least an hour.

Once the stock has cooled, line a large strainer with cheese cloth, and slowly, carefully, strain the remaining vegetables and detritus from the stock into a large bowl or tupperware. Cover the container and put the stock in the refrigerator until very cool or overnight.

Most recipes suggest skimming the fat from the top upon removing the stock from the fridge, but I prefer an extra couple of hours in the freezer – it solidifies the fat, making it possible to peel it off, rather than skimming a watery sludge, and invariably, transferring some of the fat back into the stock.

Once the stock has been de-fatted, return to the freezer for storage, or ladle yourself a bowlful and

warm on the stovetop for a delicious taste of rich, steamy stock.***

**I loathe buying the individual packets of herbs for many reasons, not the least of which is the expense of dropping \$3 for each one and only using 1/10th of the packet. Whole Foods came out with an herb seasoning pack that includes all of the above, save parsley. I had never made chicken stock with rosemary before, but ADORED the hint of flavor that it added, not to mention the ease on the budget of having all of the herbs lumped into one packet.*

***I've been chided by those more thrifty than I for throwing the meat out, but my only attempt to salvage it left me gagging at the gray, tasteless gunge parading as chicken salad. Essentially, the meat has been voided of all of its flavor (and, likely, all of its nutrients) and you're just left with tasteless protein, which, in my opinion, isn't worth saving.*

****Most recipes recommend seasoning your stock with salt and pepper, but I prefer to save seasoning it for the actual dish or bowl of soup that I'm serving. Many dishes contain sufficient seasoning on their own, and I prefer to add salt and pepper just before serving soups. I find that you need less, and it tastes fresher that way.*