

Make Soup Stock for Stews Also

Tips for Making the Perfect Soup Stock

By: R. Renee Bembry

Highly delectable soup stocks can be made in the same moment you make your soup. You don't need to use special pieces of meat, or bones, or prepare the broth on Sunday when you don't need it for two weeks down the line. You don't have to freeze it or store it or cook it more than once. All you need is a little imagination, good taste buds, and a minimal amount of skills.

The author started making soups, pardon me, delicious soups, when only a teen. She knew what she liked, what she'd observed other food preparers include in stocks they made, and had read enough about herbs and spices to know which best complemented certain entrees. Of course, soup doesn't have to be an entree, but if you make a hearty soup, it can suffice as a meal with garlic toast, hot buns, or your favorite crackers. You can even use it to revive leftover steamed rice.

When the author has a hankering for soup, or when cold weather, as well as cold viruses in the family call for soup, she decides which kind of soup best suits the occasion. If someone has a common cold, for instance, she usually goes with chicken soup. Other than that, she mostly goes for beef because that's her favorite. But whatever kind of soup you're making, remember these important tips:

1. Wash the meat, cut it into bite sized pieces, and place it in a large pot.
2. Fill the pot with enough water to cover the surface of the

uppermost piece of meat.

3. Sprinkle in about a teaspoon of salt.

4. Place the pan on the stove and let the burner bring the water to a boil.

5. Once the water is bubbling briskly, reduce the flame to a low temperature, cover the pot, and let the meat cook for about twenty minutes to half an hour. Voila, your perfect soup stock is now well underway.

6. Prepare your veggies. As you probably know, carrots, celery, potatoes, corn, peas, Lima beans, and green beans all go very well in soup. In fact you can use any or all of these in just about any soup you make. The more veggies you add, the heartier your soup will be. As for the author, she usually adds all the veggies mentioned herein minus the potatoes. Potatoes she adds on occasion and especially when she's making stew which will be touched on below.

7. Don't forget the onion. Permit the amount of soup you're making and how much you like onions to dictate the amount of onion to add to the pot. You can use a whole uncut onion if you or your children or whomever would prefer not to eat the leaves since they will soften when you cook them. You can even use minced onion, onion powder, or onion salt if you'd like to conceal the addition of the leaves altogether. Be careful if you choose the onion salt, however, because it is *salt* and you are already adding plain table salt. You've already added a tablespoon of salt, and during the seasoning process, I'm going to tell you to add more salt.

8. Exercising care not to splash boiling water on yourself, drop the veggies, including the onion into the pan with the meat.

9. Increase the temperature so you can bring the liquid back to a bubbling boil.

10. Add your seasoning.

The author would like to tell you which seasonings to add, but since seasoning is a personal thing, she will only make a few suggestions. If you like garlic cloves in your soup, add them. The author personally likes to add garlic powder or garlic salt. As with onion salt, be careful if you choose to add garlic salt. Add about a teaspoon of salt at a time (I say teaspoon because I don't know how much soup you're making. If you're making more than four quarts of soup you can probably start off with half a tablespoon.) until you capture the saltiness you desire.

Now back to the herbs, the author likes to add parsley, basil, and marjoram to all of her non creamed soups. For creamed soups, she likes to add oregano, and has discovered thyme goes well with cream of chicken. If you like bay leaves, throw one or two in. If you'd never tried cooking with a bay leaf, don't eat it or serve it to someone who doesn't know not to eat it. Bay leaves are great for spicing up soups, but not so great for eating. Don't forget the black pepper but don't add too much of this unless you like spicy hot soup.

11. After you've added all your ingredients, taste the stock in the making. Although the vegetables and herbs have yet to stew, your stock should be tasting pretty good. But if you think the broth needs more of anything, add a bit. If you're not sure, wait until the soup is nearly done and the ingredients have had a chance to meld while cooking.

12. Once your stock resumes a bubbling boil, reduce the heat, cover the pan and simmer the goods for forty-five minutes to an hour. Once the soup is done, season it to taste, and-voila! You've just prepared a perfect soup stock. And you did it without extra time or work.

STEW: You can use these instructions, with minimal additions, to make a delicious beef stew. The differences would occur in

the *thickening of the liquid*. There are two ways you can go about this process. The first is to:

(1) flour your meat before you place it in the pan. In this process, instead covering the meat with water at the start, you will have to cover the bottom of the pan with your favorite cooking oil, margarine, or butter.

(2) Let the meat brown on one side, then, flip it over. Since stewing beef isn't flat, you may want to flip it on its sides also. This may take extra time, but it will add a tremendous amount of flavor to your stew.

(3) After all the meat has browned on all sides, cover it with water and proceed with instructions from number (2 for stock) above. If you like, add potatoes.

The second way to thicken your stew is to:

(1) prepare the dish in full using the above instructions for making soup. After completion of number (12) where the soup has simmered for forty-five minutes to an hour, add a pasty thickening to the liquid.

(2) To prepare the liquid, stir three or four tablespoons of flour, or two to three tablespoons of cornstarch into to a cup of water until the powder is well blended. Slowly pour the pasty liquid over the soup, stirring as you go, until the mixture is well blended throughout the soup, and there are no lumps.

(3) Continue with the remainder of step (12) as far as seasoning completion.

The author personally prefers the flavor you get from preparing stew the first method she's presented. Although you will be adding a form of oil to the dish, browning the flour as opposed to turning the flour into a paste produces a lot more flavor.

As mentioned earlier, seasoning is a personal thing. For this reason, the author has not told you how much of any seasoning to add to your soup. You must decide.