

Make Your Own Stock



It can take a few hours to make your own stock, but you can store it for months in the freezer. Homemade stocks have fewer preservatives and less sodium (salt) than boxed or canned stocks. Making your own stock is also cheaper than buying packaged stock. Use homemade stocks instead of water to add flavor to soups, stews, and chili; bean and lentil dishes; sauces and gravies; rice, couscous, and pasta; and roasted meat, poultry, and vegetable dishes.

Getting Started

You can make a tasty stock from vegetables and herbs alone or from vegetables and herbs plus chicken, beef, or fish. Carrots, celery, and onion are great to start with. Tomatoes, leeks, and fresh herbs like dill, bay leaf, parsley, and thyme also add lots of flavor. You can save onion skins, carrot peels, and other vegetable trimmings in a resealable bag in the freezer until you have enough to make stock.

If you are making chicken, beef, or fish stock, use the bones or carcass to add more flavor. Remove excess fat from meat before adding the meat to the stock pot. If you want a meat-free stock, just leave out the meat and add more vegetables.

Equipment

- Stock pot with lid
- Chef's knife
- Cutting board
- Ladle or large spoon
- Colander or fine-mesh strainer
- Large bowl
- Slotted spoon

Cooking Steps

Use these steps as a general guideline for making any type of stock.

1. Wash fresh vegetables and cut them into large chunks.
2. Add bones or pieces of meat (if desired), vegetables, and fresh herbs to a large stock pot. Cover the ingredients with cool water. Starting with 8 cups of water will make about 4 cups of stock.

3. Bring the mixture to a boil over high heat. Turn the heat to low and simmer uncovered. Vegetable or fish stock should simmer about 1 to 2 hours. Simmer chicken or beef stock for 4 to 8 hours. The longer the stock cooks, the stronger the flavor will be.
4. While stock is cooking, occasionally skim off any fat that rises to the surface with a ladle or large spoon.
5. Place a large bowl under your colander to catch the liquid and strain the contents of the pot into the bowl. Discard bones, but save meat and vegetables like carrots and celery to add to a soup later.
6. Allow the stock to cool and then pour it into smaller containers. Refrigerate overnight. The next day, remove any fat from the surface with a slotted spoon.
7. Freeze any stock that will not be used in the next few days in sealed, freezer-safe containers. Mark the date the stock was prepared on the container. You can also pour cooled stock into ice cube trays. Once the cubes are frozen, place them in a freezer-safe plastic bag, seal it, and return the stock to the freezer. Store stock in the freezer for up to 3 months.

