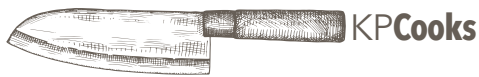


The Secret to Great Stock



by Lori Deacon
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When I was young, growing up here on the Key Peninsula, I loved to spend hours in the farm kitchen with my mother. By sixth grade I helped almost every evening with dinner. Mom was a fantastic cook and soon I learned her tricks and recipes for every delicious meal. It was the beginning of my life-long passion for food and farming — cooking and eating.

Somewhere along the way I discovered not just many new recipes but some tasty tricks of my own. I would like to share my ideas for making delicious stocks and broths that can be incorporated into soups, gravies and maybe even a risotto.

Almost everyone knows that you can just boil a chicken and end up with some version of stock. Usually gray, and very unappealing to look at or cook with. My version goes like this:

ROAST IT FIRST!

Seriously, anything can be made into stock but for the sake of argument let's use a chicken.

Whether you start with a whole raw chicken, chicken parts or even a famous Costco rotisserie bird, you have what you need to start. I usually get a fully roasted chicken when I go to the market just because it's easy and fast. The drumsticks are a nice snack, and I like to cut out the white breast meat to add to other dishes. What I'm left with is a pile of bones and skin and odd bits of meat and juices.

Place all the scraps in a large (at least 4 quart) stock pot that will fit in your oven. Re-roast at around 400 degrees, stirring from time to time to make sure everything turns a nice golden, crispy brown. Do not let it burn so keep an eye on it. This can take up to 1 hour.

Or you can try this step on the stove top. Add 3 quarts of hot tap water to what you've got in the pot and place it on the stove top, uncovered at a very low simmer. You do not want it to boil. Boiling homogenizes the fats and liquid so the stock gets cloudy. I simmer mine all day. Make sure it stays at a hot food safe temperature of at least 175 degrees.

When finished, just pour through a fine mesh sieve into a container that will easily fit in the fridge. Store it uncovered until it cools, maybe overnight. You'll notice a small layer of fat on the surface, which is easily removed before using. What's left is a delicious, golden, clear stock. It will have reduced to about 2 quarts while cooking.

Try roasting vegetables for vegetarian stock, or beef bones, onions or whatever you have left over or need to use up. Around the farm it's always waste not, want not. This also works well with the leftover Thanksgiving turkey. You'll just want a larger pot and more water.

Easy Chicken and Kale Soup

(Serves 4 to 6)

- 2 cups shredded chicken or whatever amount you have leftover
- 1 can cooked white beans (like cannellini or navy)
- 4 cups chopped kale (I prefer curly)
- 1 quart of your delicious golden stock
- Salt to taste
- Homemade croutons and fresh parmesan for garnish

Place the first four ingredients in a large pot, bring to a simmer and cook just until the kale is tender. Serve immediately. Do not add salt until you taste. ■