

# Stocks, Broths, & Fats

There are some kitchen habits that make an impact on your cooking. Having a rotating supply of hearty stocks, rich broths, and usable fats not only gives ample flavor to your dishes but is a way to use the whole animal. This is a quick guide to the basics of these simple but invaluable useful culinary skills.



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## Stock

*Defined:* A rich, flavorful liquid base made from bones, cooked over a long period of time to extract collagen, gelatin, and flavor. This is what you would use to cook things like braises, chilis, hearty soups, and anything with which you want a strong meaty backbone of flavor.

### *Materials:*

- Bones—anything from joints or hoof will add richness and texture, center cut bones will add fatty flavor
- Vegetables—carrot, celery, and onion are the classics but you can adjust these to whatever profile you want (like a ramen stock with lemongrass, garlic, and leek) or whatever vegetable scraps you've kept (avoid anything starchy like potatoes)
- Aromatics—whole black peppercorn and bay leaf are a mainstay for us but you could add a little whole clove or ginger or tumeric or parsley stems or...

*Method:* The more you do to create layers of flavor, the better it will be

1. Roast your bones (and veg if you like) in the oven at 375 degrees for about 20 minutes or until they brown and smell good. Browning the outsides creates a base of flavor and helps cut down on the amount of foam you can get in a stock.
2. Add bones to a stock pot or large crock pot. Add vegetables and aromatics. If you want it to taste meatier, keep a 3:2 ratio of bones to vegetables; less meaty, 1:1 bones to vegetables.
3. Add cold or room temp water to the pot until everything is just covered (1/2" over max). As this cooks, the contents will cook down. The more water you add, the longer it will have to cook to evaporate and concentrate the flavor of your stock.
4. Bring the whole pot to a boil over high heat and immediately bring it down to a very low simmer (med-low to low depending on your range. You want to see small, individual bubbles breaking the surface, nothing rolling). Simmer for 6-10 hours
  1. **Crock Pot:** Set to high for 12 hours/overnight. You want to extract as much as possible from your ingredients so you'll want it on high. If you want it to reduce more, remove the lid for the last hour or adjust how much water you put in initially.

5. The stock is done when it's reduced some (maybe 1"-2" down the pot) and is golden to rich brown in color (depending on your bones). It's worth it to taste it now. If you like the flavor, it's good; if it seems a little watery, keep simmering.
6. Strain your stock through a colander or mesh strainer. The finer the strain, the clearer your stock will look. Pack for the fridge or freezer.

Fresh stock will keep in the fridge for a week to 10 days. Avoid adding salt at the beginning as it will concentrate as the water evaporates from your stock and it'll be a salty, unusable mess.

## Broth

*Defined:* A light, flavorful liquid made from meat, generally cooked for a short period of time; usually, the liquid leftover from poaching. This is what you would use if you want a lighter meat flavor for soups, steaming vegetables, or in pasta and rice dishes like risotto.

### *Materials:*

- Meat—anything boneless or bone-in that you want cooked gently and cleanly, ideally a lean tender cut like chicken breast or fish fillets.
- Salt—you're cooking meat, so it should be seasoned; it won't be cooking for a long time so you won't risk it becoming too concentrated unless you're a heavy hand
- Vegetables—these are optional but will add flavor to your broth. If you're making a broth for soup, it's recommended to use some vegetables. Like stock, onions, carrots, and celery are classics, but you could easily just do garlic if you wanted. Whatever flavor profile you want for this is what you should use
- Aromatics—these are also optional but will add subtle flavor to your stock. Whole herbs or spices and bay leaves would be great.

### *Method:*

1. Season meat with salt and any dry seasonings you'd like.
2. Arrange meat and any vegetables in a uniform layer in a wide saucepan. If you need multiple layers, add the vegetables first, then dark meats, then light meats (if you're doing a whole chicken for example). Add aromatics if using.
3. Add water until covered by at least an inch of water.
4. Turn on to a **medium** heat until it comes to a simmer, about 20 mins. Because you want this to cook gently (which is why you're cooking it in water), any extremes in temperature will affect the texture of your meat—going from a raging high heat to a low disrupts the structure of the muscles in the meat and will make it tough. Patience is well worth the results here.
5. When it comes to a rolling simmer, turn heat down to a low heat and cover for 10-15 minutes for a single, boneless cut or 20-15 minutes if it's a full pot, like a whole chicken. When the juices run a clear golden color or it temps to the right temperature, remove the meat and let rest 15 minutes.

6. You can strain the broth now if you like, or leave it with all its little bits of fat and meat like grandma would.

Fresh broth will keep in the fridge 7-10 days. You could always pack it out for the freezer for a rainy soup day or in ice cube trays for easy, small broth access for steaming vegetables or pasta sauce.

## Fats

*Defined:* Fat is multipurpose and takes various forms in the body but ultimately, it acts as buffers and insulators. In its raw state, it can be used for various purposes, but, generally, it's to add flavor to a dish. In its rendered or cooked state, it can be consumed without cooking and is generally used to season or as a facilitator for heat and browning.

- Hard Fat (raw)—suet or fatback; fat that generally comes from the back of an animal; hard or solid in texture, usually comes on a steak or pork chop
  - RENDERED—beef suet becomes beef tallow, pork fatback becomes lard, which you can use for any number of cooking applications—frying, searing, sauté etc
- Soft Fat (raw)—the stringy, sloppy fat that fits in between muscles to help them move unencumbered; not very tasty on their own, they usually melt away in a braise
- Caul Fat (raw)—the web of fat that keeps digestive organs in place; great for wrapping meats in a fatty net of flavor, usually seen around pâté or sausages
- Leaf Fat (raw)—the delicate flaky fat that cradles the kidneys, separating them from the back
  - RENDERED—Pork Leaf Lard is one of the only leaf fats that get rendered and it has a light, neutral/not porky flavor which lends itself really well to baking

*Materials:* Just the fat and some water.

*Method:*

1. Chop raw hard fat or leaf fat into uniform pieces. The smaller the pieces, the quicker it will render.
2. Add to a pot or wide pan with tall sides. Add enough water to cover the bottom of the pan.
3. Bring heat to high and when the water starts to simmer, drop the heat to medium low. The hot water starts to cook the fat to get it started and the lower heat begins the process of slowly separating the fat from the solids and water that exist in suet or fatback. You want to maintain a constant stream of bubbles through the fat, so in time, you may need to increase the heat a little but not to the point where it's boiling.
4. The fat is fully rendered when the liquid is a solid golden color and the solids have turned a fried color. Strain the solids from liquid and let the fat sit in the fridge overnight where it will separate further into fat and some gelatinous waste. Toss the gelatin and keep the fat in the fridge (6 weeks) or in the freezer (6 months). The solids that are left are really tasty if you toss them in some salt or leave plain as dog treats.