

Stock Up During the Holidays
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With the holiday season just around the corner, plans begin for the upcoming holiday feast. For many, a golden brown, moist and succulent turkey with all the trimmings fits the bill. After the feast is over and the dishes are washed, however, what could possibly lure anyone back into the kitchen?

Stock is the reason, and the holiday season is the best time to make it. Not only does making stock help heat the house and give a pleasant fragrance to the home, but many can also take advantage of the reduced turkey prices. These are often as much as 60% off the pre-holiday price.

Surely most are familiar with the commercial broth that is readily available as well as affordable, so some may be wondering why bother. Flavor, richness and a wonderful mouth feel are the reasons.

Extracting the flavors of simmering meat with aromatics such as carrots, celery, spices, and herbs over a period of time makes broth. Simmering the bones and sometimes the actual meat with similar aromatics used in broth produces stock. The advantage of a stock is that the simmering extracts both the flavors and the gelatins from the bones. The result is a richer, more flavorful product with a smooth mouth feel gained from the gelatins extracted from the bones. To illustrate, non-fat milk is to whole milk as commercially canned broth is to properly cooked, homemade stock.

Additionally, how many times has a whole can of broth been opened when only a quarter cup was needed? That can of broth is relatively inexpensive, but over the course of a year, throwing away all of the unused broth is like flushing money down the drain. So, instead of settling with commercial broth, heighten the flavor of dishes with homemade stock, which has been preserved in a variety of jar sizes to match specific cooking needs.

To make homemade stock, set aside 2 to 3 days for processing from start to finish (depending on the quantity being made). For planning purposes, butcher the poultry to get the carcasses and process and preserve the meat as desired. If a richer stock is desired, roast the bones in a 350 degree oven for 45 minutes before simmering. Remember to keep all surfaces clean and always wash your hands. Poultry stocks take 4 to 6 hours of simmering and beef stocks require 3-4 hours. The stock then needs to be strained from the bones and seasoning ingredients, followed by rapidly chilling the stock through the temperature danger zone (135 to 41 degrees F). The stock is then placed into the refrigerator to chill overnight. After it is thoroughly chilled, a layer of solidified fat is easily removed. The stock can now be reheated and either pressure canned or frozen into the sizes desired.

If choosing to pressure can, follow a safe method and be sure to process for the time recommended by the National Center for Home Food Preservation at

http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_05/stock_broth.html.

May all homes be filled with mouth-watering aromas this holiday season.

Basic Poultry Stock Recipe

Source: The Professional Chef, Culinary Institute of America, 7th Edition, page 244

Yield: Approx. 1 gallon of stock

8 pounds of poultry bones and trimmings

6 quarts of cold water

1/2 pound onions, quartered

1/4 pound carrots, roughly chopped

1/4 pound celery, roughly chopped

1 bouquet garni (a bundle of herbs tied together and usually consists of a bay leaf, parsley, thyme, and other aromatics as desired)

Peppercorns, as desired

Salt, to taste

Instructions

Rinse the bones then place into a stock pot. Add the water to cover the bones by about 2 inches. Add salt to taste, if desired.

Bring the stock up to a bare simmer and skim as necessary.

Simmer 3 to 4 hours then add the aromatics, spices and herbs. Simmer an additional hour, skimming as necessary.

Strain the stock well then cool and remove the fat. (Note: Some fat will remain depending on how well the stock is strained.)

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our new Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>.