Stocks

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

Chicken Stock

- 2 kg chicken necks, backs, wings and bones

- 500g chicken feet
- 2 large carrots
- 2 large leeks (white and light green parts only)
- 2 large brown onions
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp white peppercorns
- 1 big bowl of ice cubes

Prawn Stock

- 1 kg prawn heads and shells
- 2 large brown onions, peeled and cut into 1cm mirepoix
- 1 small carrot, peeled and cut into 1cm mirepoix
- olive oil

Vegetable Stock

- 3 large carrots, peeled
- 4 large brown onions, peeled
- 4 large leeks, white and light green parts only
- 1 head of fennel
- 2 parsnips, peeled

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 bay leaf
- mixture of fresh herbs (I like using either tarragon or thyme, or you can omit this completely)

Instructions

Everything to do with how good your food tastes depends on the quality of everything that you put into it. Stocks are one of the most basic building blocks, so I figured it made sense to put some of my favourites here, i.e. chicken stock, vegetable stock and prawn stock. All of these stocks require such different treatment, which is why I've chosen them. For example, the chicken takes a couple of hours of cooking for all the flavour to fully be extracted, whereas the prawns take slightly less, and the flavour of the vegetable stock is actually detracted from if you cook it too long.
Chicken stock is a great meat-based stock that is really light in flavour, and is great as a braising liquid as it readily takes on the flavours of the ingredients cooked in it. Vegetable stock is a great all-purpose liquid for cooking (from making sauces to deglazing pans to hydrating pasta, to making any number of soups), so I always have a bottle handy in my fridge (and another in my freezer for when the one in my fridge runs out). Prawn stock is a little more specialised, but I love making prawn noodle soup (where use the diluted prawn stock to simmer pork soup bones before cooking egg noodles and fresh prawns in them), or even using it to add an extra kick to prawn pastas.

I add chicken feet to my chicken stock as there is a tonne of collagen in the feet, which gives the stock a gelatinous quality without having to reduce it. If you can't find them, then just go without. The other favourite of mine is veal stock, but I think that really deserves a post on its own, so when I make a new batch of that, I'll give you guys a heads up. :)

Chicken Stock

1. Rinse the chicken bones and feet well to remove any visible blood and any internal organs still attached. Blood proteins coagulate when heated and this will cause your stock to become cloudy. Cut the bones into 3-inch pieces.
2. Place the bones in a large stock pot, and fill with enough cold water to cover the bones by about 2 inches. Place over low heat, and bring to the boil slowly. It normally takes about an hour for my stock to come to a boil, so give it time. If you try to heat it too vigourously, it will end up emulsifying the impurities into the

soup. Heat it gently, and skim constantly.
3. While waiting for the soup to come to a boil, peel and chop the vegetables into 1-inch mirepoix. A stock is not a rubbish bin that you dump odds and ends into, so peel your carrots. That's right. PEEL THEM.
4. Once the liquid starts to come to a simmer, do as much straining as you can. This is when some of the impurities start to get dislodged, so really get all that gunk out. After about 5 minutes of heavy-duty skimming, add in the ice cubes and skim out the fat that coagulates on the surface. I must stress again that you should skim as much as possible, because once you add the aromatics and vegetables in, it'll be a lot harder to.
5. Add the vegetables and aromatics in, and bring the stock back to a simmer. Let it simmer gently, skimming where possible (I usually give up after this), for another 45 minutes to 1 hour. Turn off the heat, then let it rest for 15 minutes, as this will allow the particles to settle at the bottom of the pot.
6. Line a fine grained sieve with muslin, and set it over another medium-sized pot, which you then place in an ice bath. Ladle the stock out through the sieve into the pot. Do NOT pour the stock out, as this will force the impurities through, and do not press down on the residue that collects in the muslin. Allow the stock to cool in the ice bath until it reaches room temperature, then cover, label, and refrigerate overnight. The layer of fat which has solidified on the top can now be removed easily.
7. If using within 3 days, store in an airtight container in the fridge. Otherwise, either freeze as is, or reduce to 1/4 the volume and freeze in ice cube trays, rehydrating with 3x the volume of each cube of water when thawing to save space.

Prawn Stock

1. Place the onions and carrots with 1 tbsp of olive oil in a medium-sized pot. Sauté over gentle heat until the onions are translucent (don't let them colour) and the carrots are slightly softened. Remove from heat and set aside.

2. In a hot sauté pan, sauté the prawn heads and shells (in batches if necessary) in olive oil until bright orange and cooked through. They should be really fragrant. Add the cooked heads and shells into the pot with the onions and carrots. Repeat until all the shells are cooked.
3. Add enough cold water to cover the heads and shells by about 1cm, and place over low heat. Slowly bring it to a simmer, skimming off the impurities and foam that rise to the top, and allow to simmer for 1 hour. The stock should have taken on the colour of the shells.
4. Remove from the heat, and pour everything (in batches, if necessary), into a

blender. Process, then strain into a metal bowl or container set in an ice bath, pressing down on the shells with the back of a wooden spoon to extract all the juices. Allow to cool completely, then cover and refrigerate for 1 week or freeze for up to 1 month.

Vegetable Stock

1. Finely chop all the vegetables (you can use a food processor if possible). Fry it in olive oil in a stock pot on low heat until the vegetables are all softened and fragrant, but have not coloured (5 minutes or so). Add in the bay leaf and whatever fresh herbs if you're using any, then fill the stockpot with cold water (enough to cover the vegetables by 2 inches).
2. Slowly bring it to a simmer, then simmer for 35 minutes, skimming any impurities off the surface. When the cooking time is up, remove from the heat and let it stand for 15 minutes to allow the particles to settle.
3. Line a fine grained sieve with muslin and set it over another pot which has been placed in an ice bath. Ladle the stock through the sieve, allow to cool completely, then refrigerate for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 3 months. (This stock can also be reduced further and frozen as ice cubes.)