

Beef Stock & Beef Broth

Two different pots. Two different jobs.

The cartons at the store use these two words like they mean the same thing. They don't, and knowing which one you have changes how your cooking turns out.

Stock is made from bones. It cooks for most of a day so the collagen in the joints melts into the water as gelatin, and it gets no salt at all. **Broth** is made from meat. It cooks for an afternoon, and it gets seasoned until it tastes good enough to drink out of a mug. Stock gives a sauce its body. Broth gives a soup its flavor.

	Beef Stock	Beef Broth
Made from	Bones, especially knuckles, necks and joints full of connective tissue	Meat, usually on the bone, like shank or short rib
Cook time	8 to 12 hours	3 to 4 hours
Salt	None. You season the dish it goes into	Seasoned to taste, ready to sip
Cold from the fridge	Sets up and wobbles like jelly	Stays mostly liquid
Where it shines	Pan sauces, gravy, braises, French onion soup	Soups, sipping, cooking rice and grains

The jelly test

Chill your stock overnight, then tip the container. If it wobbles, you pulled the gelatin out of those bones and your sauces will have real body. If it pours like water, it needed more joint bones or more time. Nothing is wasted. You made a lovely broth, so use it as one and adjust the next pot.

Why stock never gets salt

Stock gets reduced. Cook a quart of salted stock down to a cup of sauce and every bit of that salt is still in the cup. Leave it unsalted and you decide the seasoning at the very end, when it counts.

Brown Beef Stock

Makes about 4 quarts · Hands-on about 1 hour · Simmers 8 to 12 hours

What You Need

- 7 to 8 lb beef bones: knuckles, neck bones and marrow bones, plus an oxtail or two if you can get them
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 12 oz onions (about 2 medium), quartered, skins left on for color
- 6 oz carrots (about 2 medium), cut in large chunks
- 6 oz celery (about 3 ribs), cut in large chunks
- About 6 quarts cold water, enough to cover the bones by 2 inches
- Sachet: 2 bay leaves, 1 teaspoon black peppercorns, 4 sprigs thyme and a small handful of parsley stems, tied in cheesecloth

The Method

1. **Roast the bones.** Heat the oven to 425°F. Spread the bones in a single layer in a roasting pan and roast for 45 minutes. Turn them and keep roasting until they are deep brown all over, another 30 to 45 minutes. Brown, not black. Scorched bones make bitter stock.
2. **Toast the paste and the vegetables.** For the last 20 minutes, brush the tomato paste over the bones and scatter the onion, carrot and celery into the pan. The paste should darken to brick red. Pull the vegetables out and set them aside.
3. **Save the fond.** Move the bones to your stockpot. Pour the fat from the roasting pan into a jar and keep it. Set the pan over a burner, add 2 cups of water and scrape up every brown bit. Pour it all into the pot. That is where your color lives.
4. **Start cold.** Cover the bones with cold water. Cold water draws the proteins out slowly, so they rise as foam you can skim off instead of clouding the stock.
5. **Keep it at a bare simmer.** Bring it up slowly until just a few bubbles break the surface. Never let it boil. Boiling churns the fat into the liquid and you end up with cloudy, greasy stock. Skim the foam for the first hour.
6. **Add the vegetables, then wait.** Once the foam slows down, add the roasted vegetables. Simmer 8 to 12 hours, topping up with water to keep the bones covered. Add the sachet for the last hour.
7. **Strain it gently.** Lift out the bones, then ladle the stock through a fine sieve lined with damp cheesecloth. Don't press on anything in the sieve. Cool it fast (see page 4) and refrigerate overnight.
8. **Lift the fat.** By morning the fat will have set into a cap on top. Lift it off in one piece and render it into tallow. The jelly underneath is your stock.

Beef Broth

Makes about 3 quarts · Hands-on about 30 minutes · Simmers 3 to 4 hours

What You Need

- 3 lb bone-in beef shank, cut crosswise (short ribs or oxtail work too)
- 1 tablespoon tallow or a neutral oil
- 1 large onion, quartered, skin on
- 2 carrots, cut in large chunks
- 2 ribs celery, cut in large chunks
- 1 head garlic, cut in half crosswise
- 4 quarts cold water
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt to start, plus more to taste
- Sachet: 2 bay leaves, 1 teaspoon black peppercorns, 4 sprigs thyme and a small handful of parsley stems

The Method

1. **Sear the meat.** Pat the shank completely dry. Heat the fat in your pot over medium-high heat and brown the meat well on both sides, in batches so the pot never crowds. Crowded meat steams instead of browning. Set it aside.
2. **Brown the vegetables.** In the same fat, cook the onion, carrot, celery and garlic cut side down until they take on some color, about 5 minutes.
3. **Add the water.** Return the meat and any juices, pour in the cold water and bring it slowly to a simmer. Skim off the foam as it rises.
4. **Simmer until the meat gives up.** Keep it at a gentle simmer for 3 to 4 hours, until the meat falls away from the bone. Add the sachet for the last hour.
5. **Save the meat.** Lift the meat out and set it aside for another meal. Strain the broth through a fine sieve.
6. **Season it last.** Stir in the salt a little at a time and taste from a mug, not a spoon. You are done when it tastes good enough to drink on its own.

Don't waste that meat

Shank that has simmered for four hours is tender and rich. Shred it back into a soup made with this broth, fry it into hash with potatoes, or pile it on good bread with horseradish.

Keeping It

Cool it fast

A deep pot of hot stock can stay warm for hours, right in the range bacteria love. Don't put the whole pot in the fridge. Split it into shallow containers, or set the pot in a sink of ice water and stir. The goal is below 70°F within 2 hours, then into the fridge.

Refrigerator and freezer

Keep stock and broth in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days. For the freezer, leave 1 inch of headspace in jars so they don't crack, and use them within 6 months. Freeze some stock in muffin tins or ice cube trays and bag the pucks. A few cubes of stock is exactly what a pan sauce for two needs.

Pressure canning

Stock and broth are low-acid foods. They must be pressure canned and can never be water-bath canned. Skim off the fat first, because fat on the rim can keep a lid from sealing. USDA guidance for meat stock at 0 to 1,000 feet is 20 minutes for pints and 25 minutes for quarts, at 10 pounds of pressure in a weighted-gauge canner or 11 pounds in a dial-gauge canner. Adjust the pressure for your altitude and follow your canner's instructions.

Render the tallow

Put the fat cap and the roasting pan drippings in a small pot, scraping off any jelly clinging to the underside. Melt it over low heat until it stops bubbling, which means the water has cooked off. Strain it through cheesecloth into a clean jar. It keeps for months in the fridge, and potatoes roasted in it will ruin you for any other kind.

Which One Do I Reach For?

Stock	Broth
Pan sauces and gravy	Beef and barley or vegetable soup
Braises and pot roast	A warm mug on a cold afternoon
French onion soup	Cooking rice, farro or barley
Reduced down into a glaze	Reheating leftovers so they don't dry out