

2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Start with good stock to create flavorful soup

They're setting up the Christmas tree lot by my house, trees are dropping their colorful leaves and nights are longer and colder. With the onset of winter, our tastes and cravings gravitate toward warm, aromatic, "fill you up" body and soul foods.

We start our food pilgrimage toward those cold weather foods, of which soup stands in the front of the line. Soup makes us feel better when we have a cold, and relieves our aches and pains. Who needs penicillin?

Soup has always made a savory, satisfying meal. It's brimming with comfort flavor and wholesome fresh ingredients. It's estimated that Americans consume 11 billion bowls of soup a year. From grandma's chicken noodle to Friday's clam chowder we're buying soup in cans, ordering it at restaurants, dropping it off by the pot for a family member or friend in need of well wishes and trading it in mass quantities.

Ancient history

Historians have transcribed scripts from ancient Roman and Greek civilizations, which describe the magical broth extracted from animal bones that would lend vigor and health to all who would partake.

Soup is one of the few wholesome "all in one" combinations on the world table. Protein, vegetables and carbohydrates can be obtained in one course.

Much of the nutritional contribution in soup cookery comes from its stock. Stock is the flavor enhanced liquid achieved by the simmering of bones, shells and other ingredients with water. Stock is used for the base of soup and sauce making.

Stock should remain neutral in flavor. It should never be seasoned or prepared with strong flavored ingredients. Stock is meant to be the soup's substructure, not the dominating flavor.

Many cooking methods call for extended periods of simmering time. When this happens, the stock liquid evaporates, and the flavor intensifies. This method is desirable if the stock was unsalted and the flavor was originally pleasant and neutral.

It is not a good idea to be creative with a basic preparation such as stock. The creativity of the soup comes from what you prepare with basic stocks, and the possibilities are endless.

When you're making stock, protein and water-soluble vitamins and minerals are extracted from bones and vegetables. Stocks must be simmered only long enough to extract the maximum flavor and not to destroy the nutritional value.

Tips

Here are some suggestions for preparing stock:

- Always use fresh ingredients
- Start with cold water
- Never boil, always simmer gently
- Skim the surface, sometimes 3 or 4 times
- Cook only for the designated time required
- Never stir a stock
- Never add salt
- Strain and cool stocks properly
- Store stocks in a clear and labeled container
- Most stocks can be frozen for up to 6 months

I teach a soup and stew cooking class every fall at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. Although my recipes and demonstrations change, the emphasis is always the same - stock is the most crucial ingredient of any and all soup preparation. To make good soup, start with good stock.

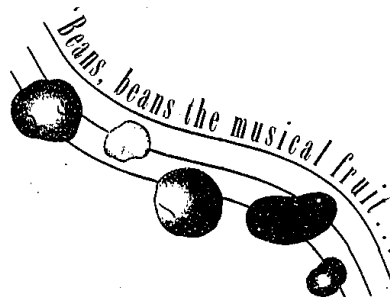
My friend, mentor and co-instructor

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LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- For the Love of Food



It's a good thing to be full of beans

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

When the air turns crisp, a hearty bean or pea soup feeds the body and warms the soul. Beans and peas may not be exotic or especially glamorous, but they are packed full of nutrients. It's hard not to sing the praises of the bean - which comes in so many sizes, flavors, shapes and colors. These humble little legumes are high in

complex carbohydrates, protein and fiber and low in fat, sodium and cholesterol. Beans and peas are the smart person's food bargain because of their low cost and high nutrient value.

We find them in soups, chili, sauces, and in dishes from every continent of the world. They are among the oldest foods known to humankind. They were used for commerce, for fertility, and for politics. In fact, during the Roman age, balloting was done with beans. A white bean represented a vote of approval and a dark bean a negative vote. A candidate with too many dark beans was eliminated from the race or was "black-balled."

Today, as in years past, beans are everywhere. Hey, they're even in "bean" bag chairs and stuffed in our children's favorite toys. Beans are eminently nutritious, admirably ecological, low on the food chain, available everywhere, wonderfully versatile, dependably delicious, and very, very cheap.

Peas, beans and lentils (which are a cousin of the bean) are collectively known as legumes. The common feature of leguminous plants is their ability to "fix" the nitrogen in the atmosphere by means of root tubercles and bacteria in the soil. The leguminous plants store the nitrogen in the seeds that grow within pods on the plant. This gives legumes their distinction of being the plant food with the highest protein content.

Legumes contain nearly all of the essential amino acids (building blocks of protein) required for good health. If you eat enough variety of legumes, grains, fruits and vegetables, you can be assured of meeting your requirements for all of the essential amino acids. Add dairy foods and eggs for an excellent and nutritious eating pattern.

But, there is that annoying little problem that's impossible to ignore - eating beans does cause intestinal gas in many people, especially those who are

not accustomed to them.

Research by the United States Department of Agriculture has determined a probable set of contributing factors to this problem. Scientists have identified two sugars which our digestive system can't break down - "raffinose" and "stachyose." Bacteria that live in our intestines can and do break them down, however, producing gas as a byproduct.

However, a lot of people do eat beans without physical or social discomfort. How do you join their enviable number? Here are some suggestions:

■ When you eat beans, keep the meal light.

■ Morning (oddly enough) is the best time to eat beans because when you are active, your digestive processes work better. Nighttime is the worst.

■ Getting plenty of exercise is a good way to improve your digestion in general.

■ Some beans are less gas-producing and some more. This varies from person to person, but in general, adzuki beans are considered the most digestible, with legumes like mung beans, split peas and lentils close behind.

■ Thorough cooking helps.

■ Folk wisdom suggests some additions: garlic, cumin, ground coriander, and certain other spices or a little vinegar added near the end of cooking time may help. If nothing else, they spice up the meal!

■ Beans are a rich source of fiber, and when you aren't accustomed to them, high-fiber foods will cause gas. Most people find that such troubles diminish as the body gets used to high-fiber foods.

■ A soaking procedure has been developed by USDA scientists to address the flatulence problem. They claim that their method removes 90 percent of the sugars that cause intestinal gas. Boil the beans for 10 minutes in five to 10 times their weight in water. (Beans weigh about half as much as water, so that would be 5 to 10 cups of water for 2 cups of beans.) Allow them to cool and soak for 24 hours at room temperature in the same water. Discard the soaking water, rinse the beans and cook according to standard cooking method.

Peggy Martinelli-Everts of Clarkston, is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a Farmington Hills-based food service and hospitality management company. Look for her story on the second Sunday of the month in Taste.

• See recipes inside.

Bean Basics

- Store cooked beans up to four days in the refrigerator
- Store dry beans in a tight container in a cool, dry place, not in the refrigerator, for up to 12 months
- Add two cups cooked, drained beans to your favorite cheesy noodle casserole for a hearty meal
- Substitute pinto beans for ground meat in Mexican tacos or burritos
- Gamish mixed beans (such as red kidney, navy and garbanzo) with a little of your favorite bottled salad dressing, chopped scallions and minced parsley to create a beautiful, calorie bean salad
- Don't add baking soda to beans as they cook unless your water is very hard. Don't add more than 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon baking soda per cup of beans
- To test dry beans, peas and lentils for quality look at:
 - Brightness of color. Loss of color means long storage, lack of freshness, and a product that will take longer to cook.
 - Uniformity of size - mixed sizes will result in uneven cooking.
 - Visible defects - cracked seed coats, foreign materials and pin holes caused by insect damage are all signs of lower quality beans. Be sure to pick through and rinse all beans.

TAMARA GRAVES/STAFF ARTIST

Garlic chicken will do your heart good

MAIN DISH MIRACLE



MURIEL G. WAGNER

Attacks and perhaps lower cholesterol. But that doesn't mean that you can add them to the usual American diet and expect the same results.

People are always on the lookout for the magic pill that will turn a cheese-

burger or slice of chocolate decadence into a health food. If such a pill exists, I and my fat-loving taste buds would be the first customer. But only a reduced fat, high fiber diet holds the promise of reducing disease risk. Even the effectiveness of cholesterol lowering medication is increased by diet changes.

Besides, it makes no sense to spend your hard-earned dollars on pills containing supplements when the same elements can be provided in the foods you choose to eat - and it tastes better to boot.

As you might suspect, a case in point is this month's recipe for garlic chicken. This dish is a real treat - not a treatment. For the money that you'd plunk down for the garlic pills, you can prepare a wonderful tasting entrée for the whole family and probably reap

some benefits for their hearts as well as yours.

The garlic cloves, cooked under the skin of the chicken combined with the lemon and parsley, flavor the meat deliciously. It's no sacrifice to your taste buds to remove the skin of the chicken before you eat it. Removing the skin will reduce the fat and saturated fat by at least two-thirds. The garlic, lemon and parsley make the bland chicken breast a flavorful treat. You might even want to eat a piece of the garlic since cooking substantially reduces the pungency of the bulb.

The preparation couldn't be simpler. Garlic, as you know, is bought in fresh bulbs comprised of many cloves. Buy garlic that has no green shoots. These have a bitter taste.

To separate the garlic cloves, put a

cloth over the bulb. Hit the covered garlic with a heavy pan or knife. Remove the cloth and any loose skins. To remove the peel from the loose cloves, I like to dip them in boiling water for about a minute. The peeling slips off easily. It's rather like peeling a ripe tomato by blanching.

The parsley that you stuff into the cavity can be either curly or flat leaf. I like to use the flat leaf because it has more flavor. When fresh herbs are available, thyme or a small amount of rosemary makes a flavorful bird, but still use the fresh lemon.

One of the nutritional virtues of this recipe is the low sodium content. The lemon, garlic and fresh herbs make salt unnecessary. Be sure to cook the chicken

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