

Chicken Vegetable Soup with Homemade Bone Broth

Let's talk collagen! Collagen is the most abundant protein in the human body and is the substance that holds the whole body together. It is found in the bones, muscles, skin and tendons, where it forms a scaffold to provide strength and structure.

Bone broth is one of the world's best sources of natural collagen. Protecting joints, strengthening the gut lining, maintaining healthy skin, hair, and nails, and supporting immune system function are just some examples of what collagen does for you. A lot of people, including my husband at one time, take glucosamine for pain and arthritis in joints. By drinking one cup of bone broth a day gives you more collagen than the supplements and it also includes other great minerals that glucosamine does not have. Taking glucosamine supplements to help with joint pain has been common knowledge for years, but it turns out that bone broth has glucosamine too.

Bone broth is very easy to make. You can use chicken bones as well as turkey, wild caught fish, duck, etc. When I buy a rotisserie chicken, I save the bones in my freezer until I'm ready to make my stock. There are quite a few ways and suggestions of how to make your stock, what ingredients to use, and how long it should be cooked. My recipe differs in that I don't let it simmer quite as long but the thick gelatinous broth, once it's cooled, is one indication that you have got some good healthy broth. My quick and easy recipe is below:

Ingredients:

- 1 or 2 pounds of bones from rotisserie chicken
- 1/2 cup onions, roughly chopped
- 1 clove of garlic, simply cut in half with the skins on
- pinch pepper
- pinch salt
- 1 Tbs apple cider vinegar (which helps extract the minerals from the bones without leaving a vinegar taste)

NOTE: Most recipes include roughly chopped carrots, celery, and herbs to their stock. I incorporate all of that after my stock is done and I'm ready to make a good soup, because when your stock is done you need to strain it to remove all the bones. I find there are so many little cooked-down bones that it's too time consuming to remove the carrots and celery alone. For me, the garlic and onion with the bones still provides a fantastic taste.

Add the bones, onions, garlic, and pepper to a large dutch oven or stock pot. Add enough water to cover and bring this to a roaring boil. Let boil for 10 or so minutes and turn down to simmer. Simmer for 3 hours. (The longer you simmer, the more collagen is extracted from the bones. That's why a lot of recipes say to put all ingredients in a crock pot and let simmer overnight.) You may need to add water as it begins to evaporate. The bones provide such good flavor, it shouldn't taste watered down. You can always add seasonings when you make your soup or drink your bone broth.

After 3 hours, strain the broth to remove all of the bones, onion, and garlic. It is good to cool this down quickly as the hot broth breeds bad bacteria. You can add 2 cups of ice to help cool down quickly. Once it's cool, you can freeze it up to a year or place it in the refrigerator for about 5 days. When you remove the broth from the fridge, you will notice a layer of fat that has risen to the top. You can heat this back up and drink it, or if you're like me and don't need the added fat, ladle it out before heating up the broth. Your broth should be jiggly and gelatinous. If it is not, you might not have used enough bones or simmered it long enough to extract the gelatin.

Once you're ready to make your soup, just heat the broth up with your favorite ingredients. I have used carrots, celery, onion, broccoli, cauliflower, edamame, and chicken. Makes for one healthy pot of soup!

Bon Appetite!

This delicious recipe can be found on the website *Points In My Life*
(www.pointsinmylife.com)

"Every cook praises his own broth." - Anonymous