

Something from Nothing Chicken Stock from The Cook's Life

Of course you can make chicken stock from raw chicken and then use the meat for soup or other recipes. I prefer to bake or roast my chicken and use just the picked over bones for my stock, but feel free to start with bone-in breasts or thighs or a whole chicken. If you are cooking the chicken, be sure not to let the water come to a boil or you will end up with tough meat. Keep it at a gentle simmer.

Leftover bones from 6-8 chicken breasts or from a whole chicken

Water

3-4 carrots

2 medium onions or 4 medium shallots

5-10 cloves garlic

3-4 ribs celery

Pepper

Salt

As you can see the amounts vary considerably – adjust to what you have available and your preferences. Place the bones in a large pot (at least 6 quarts) and add water until it is about halfway up the bones. They don't have to be covered with water. Put the pot over medium heat and let it start heating while you prepare the vegetables.

Peel the carrots, onions or shallots and garlic. Cut them in half or quarters and add them into the pot, poking them down into the bones. Cut the celery ribs in half or quarters and add to the pot. It won't look like enough water, but the bones and vegetables will shrink and compact as they cook. Too much water and you will have thin, weak-tasting stock. Put the lid on the pot and let it come to a boil. Reduce the heat to a gentle simmer and cook, with the lid on, for 1½-2 hours, stirring occasionally and skimming off any foam that comes to the top.

After two hours, taste the stock. It should taste like chicken and vegetables. Add pepper and salt to taste – start with ½ teaspoon of salt and go from there. You can always add more, but you can't take it out.

Strain the stock through a mesh sieve and discard the bones and vegetables. Chill the stock for several hours and remove any fat that congeals at the top. If you want to get really frugal, you can freeze the fat separately and use it to sauté rice before adding the liquid.

If your stock tastes too watery after you strain it, you can return it to the pot and continue cooking it without the lid until it is more concentrated.

Store the stock in the fridge for a few days, or freeze for longer storage. Freeze it in amounts that you want for recipes, so you aren't thawing 6 cups of stock to use 1 cup of it.