

ORGANIC LIVING

By
Robert Rodale

GOOD MEALS GO OUT WITH THE GARBAGE

I have a theory -- backed up by plenty of facts -- that the quality of American home cooking has declined mainly because cooks no longer know how to use leftovers creatively. They have the totally wrong idea that poultry bones, cooking juices, meat scraps, beet tops and other by-products of meal preparation are wastes.

Actually, those odds and ends that now tend to overflow our garbage cans are the makings of a nutrient-rich, flavor-filled liquid called stock. And it is the lack of stock which makes many cooks completely unable to duplicate the fantastic flavors achieved by great restaurant cooks -- or by your grandmother many years ago in a rustic kitchen.

Stock is what gives a mysterious good flavor to soup, and makes your family say, "My, that's good, what did you put in it?" If they ever knew, they would understand why the garbage can has been lighter lately. Variety in the stock pot is what makes soup-making an adventure again.

Gravies, sauces, casseroles and other "routine" foods also take on a totally new flavor and nutritional dimension when stock-making becomes a regular part of cooking. All those vitamins, minerals and flavors are



poured into your family instead of down the drain.

What is stock, you ask? Stated simply, it's your personal store of liquid resulting from the cooking of a wide variety of foods. Bones left over from a poultry dinner can be put in a pot with several quarts of water, an onion or two, and vegetable tops -- then simmered for a while to convert the water into stock. Leftovers from roast meat of all kinds can be simmered in water to make stock. A little salt or even vinegar can be added to help extract the nutrient-rich juices from meat, bones and vegetables.

Why does stock make foods taste so good? Time and blending of flavors is the answer. That extra-good taste that a meaty vegetable soup has a day or two after being made is an example of the effect stock has on food flavors. You can get the same result much quicker by making stock in advance.

How do you use stock? Include it in all appropriate recipes that call for water or broth. Add vegetables to make soups. Thicken it and add meat juices to make gravy. Exercise a little caution about mixing meat flavors, but otherwise the stock-cook should have few problems. Keep it refrigerated and stock will stay wholesome for a week or longer. Freeze some so you will never be without it. But you'll find yourself wanting to use it as soon as possible.

Here are some of the general principles of stock-making, followed by Nancy Albright, author of THE RODALE COOKBOOK:

1. Make stock from any leftover chicken, turkey, beef, veal, pork, lamb, or ham bones -- even bones from duck or other game -- and meat scraps. If you're not planning to make stock immediately, freeze them for later use.

Just remember that each stock should be distinctive. Beef and veal can be combined, but ham or lamb should be kept separate because each has its own flavor and lends itself to a certain type soup. For example, ham stock goes with pea or bean soup, lamb stock with barley and vegetables.

2. If you have none of the above on hand, you can

buy inexpensive chicken or turkey wings, backs, necks, beef or veal shin bones, beef heart, or even an oxtail. And don't forget fish heads to make the basis of a fish chowder.

3. Save limp carrots, celery, lettuce and cabbage leaves, tops of beets, green onions, celery, and other salad "discards," as well as liquid drained off cooked vegetables. Store in a closed jar in refrigerator until ready to make stock -- up to a week.

To prepare stock, add vegetables and vegetable water to bones and meat scraps and add enough cold water to cover the bones -- about two quarts in all, two teaspoons salt, and four tablespoons vinegar, if desired. Cover and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for three to four hours. Strain stock, cool and refrigerate. Remove congealed fat from the surface and discard. Use stock within a few days or freeze it in bread pans. Once frozen, it can be removed from pan and wrapped for return to freezer.

Use whichever stock will best enhance the flavor of the dish you are planning. Wherever water or milk is called for, substitute stock for all or part of the liquid, as in gravy, sauces, casserole dishes, stews. Brown rice is delicious cooked in stock instead of water.

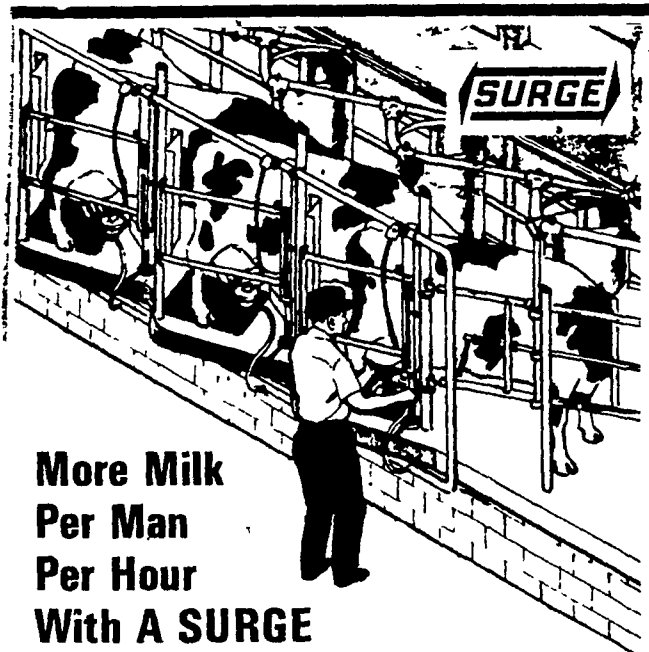
Not all your kitchen scraps belong in the stock pot, but they can enrich your garden instead of your garbage pail. Read about nature's own recycling and soil-building plan in the 47-page illustrated booklet, "Make Compost in 14 Days." To get your copy, send fifty cents to Robert Rodale, Organic Living, in care of this newspaper. Ask for it by name and allow four weeks for delivery.

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