

Vegetable Based Stocks

While vegetable stocks are still very high in plant minerals, they do not contain gelatin like bone broths do. I have found that the best way to make vegetable stock is to save all of my leftover vegetable scraps from everyday cooking. This includes any stems from greens or herbs like parsley or rosemary, the skins of things you may peel, the ends of carrots, the cores of fruit, the outer layers of onions, the hearts and leaves of celery, and anything that is past its prime (though not moldy!). Don't limit yourself; just stop composting all your fresh food scraps and throw them in a bag or container in the freezer. You can add to that bag or container over and over again until you are ready to make stock. The only things I don't save for stock are vegetable bits that may have dirt on them; this could make the stock gritty tasting. An example would be the top part of a beet, where the stem and leaves meet the root—sometimes there is dirt and even mold in there. I just toss that bit in my compost instead.

You might be thinking that some of these things I am recommending you save for stock are bitter, and that is why you don't eat them in the first place. If you really don't like the taste of something, then don't include it in your stock. But usually there are so many other wonderful flavors in the stock that it all melds together and won't taste bitter at all. I do try to avoid filling a stock completely with brassica family vegetables (cabbage, kale, collards, cauliflower, broccoli, etc.), as they can have a strong flavor and can cause gassiness. Regardless, the peels, ends, skins, and stems that you may not like for their flavor and texture in your everyday cooking are often very high in vitamins and minerals. While vitamins will not survive temperatures above 110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit (and therefore don't matter to stock), the minerals will make it into your soup. If you are afraid your stock will be too bitter, just add a little extra onion, carrot, or celery to cover it up. You can use roots, too—parsnips, beets, burdock root, and celery root—and, of course, plenty of those winter health herbs and spices!

If you don't have enough food scraps to make broth, supplement with any combination of fresh produce you like.

Potential Stock Ingredients

Apples, beets, cabbage, carrots, celery, garlic, green beans, greens (including kale, collards, beet greens, etc.), mushrooms (fresh or dried), onions, parsnips, pears, potatoes, tomatoes, and any culinary/medicinal herbs and spices

These are just some ideas. Truthfully, you can add almost anything to your stock, so be creative and have fun with the flavor. Remember, peels, stems, ends, skins, and all scraps are great. Waste not, want not. This technique is great for meat-based stocks too; save any extra food scraps and throw them in with your bone broth.

Vegetable Stock

2 tablespoons butter, ghee, or extra-virgin olive oil
1 onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
3 stalks celery, chopped
1 bay leaf
2 or 3 sprigs fresh herbs
3 or more cups vegetable scraps (fresh or frozen)
Water, as needed

In a large saucepan, heat the butter, ghee, or olive oil over medium heat. Add all of the vegetables, herbs, and scraps and sauté gently, until the onions are translucent and the herbs and spices have released their aroma, about 5 minutes. Add enough water to cover all the ingredients and bring it to a boil. Then reduce the heat and simmer over low heat for 1 to 2 hours.

When it's done, strain the stock and allow it to cool before storing. You can use the stock right away or freeze it for later. I usually make stock in large batches and freeze what I do not need for later. This stock will keep for about 1 week in the refrigerator and for 3 to 6 months in the freezer.

You can freeze stock and broth in plastic containers (make sure the stock has cooled before pouring it into plastic!) or in glass jars. When you freeze liquid in glass, remember that the liquid will expand when it freezes, so allow a few inches of space in the top of the jar for expansion.

Note: You can also make a broth using only freezer scraps. In this case, you can skip the browning/sauté step and just add the ingredients to water and start cooking.