

Lamb Stock or Demi-Glace

Makes 20 cups stock or 8 cups demi-glace

So, what do you do with all those bones that are left over from the processing of your lamb or from that last dinner party? Don't throw them out! With a little bit of effort you can make the most delicious soup and gravy base that you have ever tasted.

We have adapted the following recipe from Jacque Pepin's "The Art of Cooking". The recipe initially called for veal bones (good luck finding those, these days) but we found that it works well with leftover bones from a tray of chops or whatever lamb bones are handy.

Ingredients

10 pounds lamb bones (raw or cooked)
1 pound yellow onions, unpeeled & quartered
¾ pound carrots, cut into 1" chunks
1 head of garlic, cloves separated & crushed
1 bunch parsley or the stems from 2 bunches
¾ pound chopped celery (leaves & centers ok)
6 bay leaves
1 Tbs dried thyme
1 Tbs whole black peppercorns
1-1/2 pounds ripe tomatoes (canned is ok)

Technique

Put the bones in a single layer on two roasting pans (we use commercial half-sheet pans with a 1" lip). Roast them in a 400 degree oven for 1-1/2 hours, turning them every 20 minutes or so.

Add the onions and carrots to the pans and continue roasting for another 45 minutes, turning every 15 minutes. The bones should be nicely browned, but not burnt. You may have to remove some of the bones early, if they look like they are getting too brown.

Put the bones and vegetables in a large stockpot (20-30 quarts, if you have one) or split them evenly into two smaller pots.

Discard any fat that is on the roasting pans, and then add about a cup of water to the pans and heat them on top of the stove until the water simmers.

Using a spatula, scrape all the brown bits from the bottom of the pans and pour the liquid into the stockpot. Be careful not to burn the juices as they will then be bitter and unusable. Do not use burned or blackened bones or pan drippings—discard them!

Fill the stockpot with water up to about 2 inches below the rim and bring to a boil. Boil gently for about 45 minutes and then remove from the heat and skim off as much fat as

you can. Using a ladle and a fat separator makes this a snap. Add all the remaining ingredients and bring to a boil again. Cover and boil gently for 8-10 hours or overnight.

Strain the stock into another pot through the finest mesh sieve you have. Do not attempt to squeeze the juices from the solids as this will muddy the stock. Set it aside to cool.

When the stock is completely cold, remove any fat that has come to the top. If needed, bring the stock to a boil again and reduce it to about 5 quarts. When cold, it should be light colored, practically fat-free, salt-free, and rather gelatinous.

This is an excellent base for soups and stews, far superior to any beef stock that you can buy. You can keep it in the fridge for up to a week, or freeze it in plastic tubs. Or you can make demi-glace.

Demi-glace is just a reduced brown stock. To make it, take the original 5 quarts of stock and boil it down to about 2 quarts and then cool it. It should be highly gelatinous, and have a beautiful dark reddish-brown color.

When the demi-glace is still cool, pour it into a flat pan, so that the liquid is only about 1" deep. Then put it into the refrigerator. When it is completely cold, slice it with a sharp knife and remove the chunks from the pan. Wrap them in plastic wrap or put them into a sealed plastic bag and freeze them. They stay good indefinitely, and are really handy when you need a little sauce or stock.

One of our favorite uses for demi-glace is to pan-fry a pound of sliced mushrooms until they are nice and brown. Then we add ½ cup demi-glace, ½ cup water, and 1 Tbs of plum jam and cook it until we have a nice thick mushroom gravy. It's quick, easy, and delicious.