



Vegetable Broth Base

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 16: Vegetarian Essentials

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

A good vegetable stock is an important ingredient to have on hand, but supermarket offerings don't taste like vegetables, and traditional homemade versions are expensive and time-consuming to make. In our recipe, we grind a selection of fresh vegetables, salt, and savory ingredients to a paste that we can store in the freezer and reconstitute as needed. Leeks provide good allium flavor, and a small amount of freeze-dried onions support the fresh flavor of the leeks. Tomato paste and soy sauce provide an umami boost.

Makes about 1 3/4 cups base; enough for 7 quarts broth

For the best balance of flavors, measure the prepped vegetables by weight. Kosher salt aids in grinding the vegetables. The broth base contains enough salt to keep it from freezing solid, making it easy to remove 1 tablespoon at a time. To make 1 cup of broth, stir 1 tablespoon of fresh or frozen broth base into 1 cup of boiling water. If particle-free broth is desired, let the broth steep for 5 minutes and then strain it through a fine-mesh strainer.

INGREDIENTS

- 2** leeks, white and light green parts only, chopped and washed thoroughly (2 1/2 cups or 5 ounces)
- 2** carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (2/3 cup or 3 ounces)
- 1/2** small celery root, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (3/4 cup or 3 ounces)
- 1/2** cup (1/2 ounce) parsley leaves and thin stems
- 3** tablespoons dried minced onions
- 2** tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 1/2** tablespoons tomato paste
- 3** tablespoons soy sauce

INSTRUCTIONS

Process leeks, carrots, celery root, parsley, minced onions, and salt in food processor, scraping down sides of bowl frequently, until paste is as fine as possible, 3 to 4 minutes. Add tomato paste and process for 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl every 20 seconds. Add soy sauce and continue to process 1 minute longer. Transfer mixture to airtight container and tap firmly on counter to remove air bubbles. Press small piece of parchment paper flush against surface of mixture and cover. Freeze for up to 6 months.

TECHNIQUE

WHAT'S IN? WHAT'S OUT? BUILDING A BALANCED BROTH

The key to our concentrate was finding a combination of vegetables that produced a broth that was unobtrusive but still had enough backbone to give a dish depth and complexity.

CELERY ROOT, BUT NOT CELERY: Celery root contributes a



mild yet complex celery flavor, while celery comes across as bitter and sour. Celery gets its bitter flavor from a compound called sedanolide. Celery root possesses it, too, but in lesser quantities.



LEEKs AND FREEZE-DRIED ONION, BUT NOT ONION: Onion made the stock sulfurous and sweet (and too watery). Low-moisture, low-sugar leeks are more neutral, while freeze-dried minced onions provide depth.



TOMATO PASTE, BUT NOT TOMATO: Fresh tomatoes were too mild and watery, while sun-dried tomatoes were too sweet-sour; tomato paste adds a savory depth without identifying itself.



TECHNIQUE

A BROTH BASE YOU CAN FREEZE—AND NEVER THAW

Our recipe calls for 2 tablespoons of kosher salt (we use Diamond Crystal). That might seem like a lot, but once the base is diluted, it contains just 399 milligrams of sodium per 1-cup serving; commercial broth ranges from 240 to 1,050 milligrams per cup.

Furthermore, because salt depresses water's freezing point, the concentrate will never freeze solid. This means that you can keep it in the freezer for months and scoop out exactly the amount you need without ever having to thaw it.

SCOOP AND RECONSTITUTE: Mix 1 tablespoon of base with 1 cup of boiling water.

