

Title:

Taking Stock of Leftovers

Word Count:

617

Summary:

A large goose or turkey is an impressive centerpiece for a celebration meal, but you'll have to find a way of dealing with the leftovers. Making a stock is a good way to make the best of your bird.

Keywords:

cooking, food, stock

Article Body:

There's nothing more impressive to serve up at a big occasion than a large roasted bird, whether a duck, a turkey or a goose. As well as being delicious, a roast of this kind will be a centerpiece of a festive or celebratory meal, giving a real feeling of luxury and extravagance to your guests.

However, once the theatre of carving and the enjoyment of the feast is over, you'll invariably have to deal with a substantial amount of leftovers. Cold cuts with pickles is a favourite, and a real treat for the day after, but by the third or fourth helping this might start to pall, and you may even begin to regret buying such an impressively large bird.

Even in today's disposable society, the idea of throwing a roast into the garbage when there's still so much to be gained from it seems like such a waste, but what can you do when you can't stand the thought of another cold slice of poultry?

The answer is to make a stock, capturing the flavour of the bird in a handy liquid form that can be used for weeks or even months afterwards, adding an extra layer of taste to your day to day meals.

The process of making a stock is actually very simple, even if it's one of those topics sometimes shrouded in a sense of cheffy mystery. To begin, strip as much meat off the bones as you feel you might want to keep, leaving behind all the fatty or otherwise inedible pieces. Break the bones up into manageable pieces with a pair of strong kitchen scissors, and put them into a roasting tin along with any scraps of skin or meat that are remaining.

Roast the mixture in a hot oven until the bones take on some color - the more color, the better the flavor, although you want to avoid actually burning it.

Once you think the bones have been roasted to perfection, the next step is to add them to a large pan along with some basic flavorings such as a carrot, some celery, a small onion - anything you have to hand in your storecupboard. Fill the pan with enough water to cover the contents, bring to the boil, and simmer gently for at least an hour, preferably two or three.

Many people also like to add some peppercorns to their stockpot before cooking, or even herbs such as bay or thyme. The important thing to remember is that you shouldn't introduce too many strong flavors that will overpower the meat, and also to be very restrained with seasoning - as the stock cooks and the liquid evaporates, the flavor will become more intense, and if you've added salt it may become overpowering. To be safe, only use salt right at the end of the cooking process.

Once the stock has been simmering for an hour or three, strain it through a fine sieve, or even better a double thickness of muslin. At this point you can discard all the solids, as they will have done their job by giving up all their flavour to the liquid.

Your basic stock is now finished, and can be used to make a wholesome broth with the meat you previously stripped off the bones. Alternatively, a simple way of preserving your stock for future use is to reduce it down by boiling until it's a thick, powerfully flavoured liquid with an almost syrup-like consistency.

This can then be frozen in an ice cube tray, with a cube or two being added to future recipes in place of a stock cube or powder, giving your meals a memory of your festive feast for months to come.