

## Life Time Learning Presents

### SOUPS, STEWS AND CASSEROLES

Soups, Stocks, and Broths – they are all terms that are used almost interchangeably – however there is a difference. A broth is intended to be served, as is, while a stock is used in the production of other dishes.

Meat and poultry broths have a more pronounced flavor than their stock counterparts because they are based on meat rather than bones.

By the same token, broths lack the body of stocks due to the lack of gelatin from bones, which gives stocks body.

The base for almost all stock, broths and soups is a vegetable combination called a Mirepoix. It is a combination of chopped aromatic vegetables, usually two parts onion to one part carrot and one part celery. In New Orleans, it is known as the Trinity, two parts onion to one part celery and one part green pepper.

When using bones for broths and stocks, use bones that are large and contain greater quantities of gelatin in them, they will give you greater flavor.

A Bouquet Garni is often found in the making of broths and soups. It is a small bundle of herbs tied with a string and allowed to soak in the liquid while it cooks. It usually contains bay leaf, parsley, thyme, and possible other aromatics such as rosemary, sage or even dried items like peppercorns.

Great broths and stocks need to cook for several hours, skimming all the time to remove any fat that gathers. The longer the cooking time the denser it gets and the more flavorful it will be. A really great veal stock, which we use to make at the Bailiwick Inn, is almost as thick when done as jelly, and just a little goes a long way.

Stews and casseroles are often thought of as peasant dishes since they frequently call for less tender and less expensive, main ingredients than do other cooking techniques. These dishes have a robust, hearty flavor and are often considered

fall or winter meals. However, by replacing traditional ingredients with poultry, fish or shellfish, casseroles and stews can be faster to prepare, lighter in flavor and color, and appropriate for contemporary menus.

A good stew or casserole is a dish of great complexity and flavor concentration that is simply not possible with other cooking techniques. Stews share many similarities with casseroles from the cuts of meat chosen to the texture of the finished dish. Stews differ from casseroles in that the foods are cut into bite-sized pieces and are cooked in more liquid.

The great thing about soups, stews and casseroles is that they can be a single pot meal. Once cooked, they have a tendency to reheat well and lose little flavor. They are considered hearty in that a little goes a long way in filling you up. Usually a stew, soup or casserole, paired with a salad and maybe some bread and wine, is a simple, hearty winter meal.

One last thing to remember is to go easy on salt in the beginning of the cooking processes. Salt does not evaporate, so it increases in flavor the longer it cooks as the liquid usually decreases due to evaporation.

Also use dry herbs for longer, slow cooking, and then finish with fresh herbs.