

INTRODUCTION TO SOUPS AND STEWS BY CHEF CAL KRAFT

Soups, Stocks, and Broths – they are all terms that are used almost interchangeably. However there is a difference. The major difference between a broth and a stock is that the broth is intended to be served, as is; whereas the stock is used in the production of other dishes. Soups are made from a combination of broths and/or stocks and other items.

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 most stocks, broths and soups is a vegetable combination called a MIREPOIX. It is a combination of chopped aromatic vegetables – two parts onion to one part carrot and one part celery. If you were cooking in New Orleans, it would be called THE TRINITY – two parts onion to one part celery and one part green pepper.

When using bones for broths and stocks, use bones such as leg and joint bones as opposed to rib and chest bones since they are more likely to have greater quantities of gelatin in them. The more gelatin found in the bones, the more flavor derived from those bones.

A Bouquet Garni is often found in the making of broths and soups. It is a small bundle of herbs tied with string. It is used to flavor stocks, braises, and other preparations. Traditional Bouquet Garni usually contains a bay leaf, parsley, thyme, and possible other aromatics such as rosemary, sage, or even dried items like peppercorns or cloves.

A great broth or stock needs to cook for several hours, skimming all the time to remove any fat that gathers. The longer a broth/stock cooks, the denser it gets and the more flavorful it will be. A really great veal stock is almost as thick as jelly, and a little goes a long way.

Stews are often thought of as peasant dishes because they frequently call for less tender (and less expensive) main ingredients than do other techniques. These dishes have a robust, hearty flavor and are often considered fall and winter meals. However, by replacing traditional ingredients with poultry, fish or shellfish, stews can be faster to prepare, lighter in flavor and color, and appropriate for contemporary menus.

A good stew 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. They differ from casseroles is that the foods are cut into bite-sized pieces and are cooked in more liquid.

The great thing about soups and stews are 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 or soup is paired with a salad, maybe some bread, and a glass of wine. And that's dinner.

One last thing, remember to go very 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 do to evaporation. Most chefs season with salt at the end of the cooking processes, not the beginning.

I hope you enjoy this class. Please feel free to ask any questions and I will try to answer them all. If I do not know the answer, I will try to research it and find the answer for you. You can reach me at: chefcal007@yahoo.com.

Chef Cal
© 01/2020