



ANSON MILLS

Ultimate Vegetable Stock

Yield

About 2 quarts

Time

20 minutes to prep and 1¼ hours to simmer

Cooking Remarks

Without proper supervision, vegetable broth can easily drift into the dangerous waters of sweet vegetable tea. This happens when too many members of the onion family get together for a reunion and invite only their immediate relatives. Any broth or stock needs a fair representation of aromatics, but without the infusion of meat, a vegetable broth requires careful attention to balance. Here, we bring balance in the form of collard greens (bracing but not sulfurous) and cauliflower (soulful and delicate, not pushy like your average crucifer). Slices of winter squash, seeds and all, impart both depth and dimension to this broth. The splendid reedy tang of bruised lemongrass catches the attention of all the other vegetables. Okay, now, everyone in the pool!

If it is not the season of winter squash, feel free to omit it. The squash isn't a make-or-break proposition for this recipe, but its glycerin contribution offers a silky weight and density to the body of the broth as well as a softly, sweet floral counterpoint to the other vegetables. This broth freezes well.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a heavy-bottomed 8-quart stockpot with a lid, a wooden spoon, a large fine-mesh strainer, and a large heatproof bowl.

Ingredients

2 medium yellow onions, peeled and chopped
3 large shallots, peeled and sliced
2 large or 4 small leeks, white and light green parts only, halved lengthwise, washed well, and sliced
1 garlic head, unpeeled and halved
2 small celery ribs, chopped
2 small carrots, peeled and chopped
Vegetable oil spray
3 quarts spring or filtered water
1 small cauliflower head (12 ounces), trimmed of stem and leaves, sliced
½ small acorn squash or the bulb end of a butternut squash, unpeeled and with seeds, cut crosswise into 5 slices, each about ½ inch thick
3 large fresh thyme sprigs
1 Turkish bay leaf

2 teaspoons fine sea salt
2 teaspoons black peppercorns
1 bunch collard greens (12 ounces), washed and chopped
1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, washed, shaken dry, and coarsely chopped
2 scallions, trimmed
1 stalk lemongrass, trimmed to the bottom 6 inches and bruised with the back of a chef's knife,
or 1 lemon, halved

Directions

1. Toss the onions, shallots, leeks, garlic, celery, and carrots in a heavy-bottomed 8-quart stockpot. Spray the vegetables with vegetable oil spray for 10 seconds, and then stir well to coat. Cover the pot and cook the vegetables over low heat, stirring occasionally, until they are softened, fragrant, and beginning to color, about 30 minutes. (If, after 30 minutes, the vegetables haven't begun to color, uncover the pot and cook 15 minutes more.)

2. Increase the heat to medium-high and add the water, cauliflower, squash, thyme sprigs, bay leaf, salt, and peppercorns. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered, until the vegetables are spent, about 30 minutes, adjusting the heat as needed to maintain a gentle but active simmer. Add the collard greens and parsley, pushing them into the liquid, and simmer for 10 minutes. Chop the scallions and add them to the pot along with the lemongrass or halved lemon. Remove the pot from the heat and let the stock steep for 5 minutes. Strain the stock through a large fine-mesh strainer into a large heatproof bowl.