



Homemade Stock

Making stock is a long, slow, laborious process that takes HOURS, right? Nope, not really. And it's even more convenient if you have a pressure cooker.

But still, even with a pressure cooker, why would you want to go through all that work when you can just buy it in a carton at the store? If you've been asking yourself these questions, this article will answer all of them and more.

GL's Top 4 Reasons to Make Your Own Stock

1. It's so much fresher!

Who knows how long that stuff in the carton has been sitting on the shelf at the super market? It's pretty much a guarantee it wasn't made this week, and most likely not even this month! Of course, if you use it by the sell-by date you're safe, but nothing quite beats vegetable stock made fresh in your own home.

2. Control of ingredients, particularly sodium

What is dextrose? What is "natural flavoring"? Why does my vegetable stock need sugar!? These are the types of questions you may be asking yourself when reading the ingredients on a carton of vegetable stock. Ground Leaf's stock recipes contain whole, natural foods. So if you don't feel like googling "what is Disodium 5'-Ribonucleotides" while wandering the aisles of the grocery store, we welcome you to make your own all natural stock! Plus for those of you watching your sodium, keep in mind that some boxed stocks can have up to 22% of your recommended daily sodium intake. And while we can't quote the exact amount of sodium in our stocks as they have not been lab tested, be assured they contain much less (the Vegetable and Tomato Stock recipes have no added salt and will only contain naturally occurring sodium found within the vegetables).

3. Better flavor

Have you ever added boxed stock to a recipe and all of a sudden that's all it tasted like? Boxed stocks have a strong, distinctive taste that can affect, and even hijack the flavor of, your recipes. This exact experience in the Ground Leaf test kitchen was what made us realize it was time to start making our own stocks.

4. Use up ingredients that might otherwise go bad

Do you ever find it difficult to use an ENTIRE bunch of celery before it goes bad? Are the last few stalks almost always destined for the compost bin? Making your own homemade stock uses just a few ingredients that you probably already have on hand and it's a great way to use food that might soon go bad. Are you about to head out of town with a fridge full of food? Turn it all into a stock, store it in freezer safe containers and welcome yourself back home with vegetable stock that's ready for a quick and easy meal.

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But throwing out the veggies after cooking and straining seems like such a waste!

Yeah, we get that; but seriously, try eating a piece of that carrot. All of the flavor and nutrients have been leached out of the vegetables and into the water, leaving the vegetables tasteless and mushy. But if you really want, you can try turning the leftover veggies into something else. Add a grain and some seasoning, and roll it around in some breadcrumbs and bake some patties with it.

This “flavorful vegetable water” is so full of nutrients that you can think of it as liquid gold (as that’s probably the color it is). You can now use this gold in any of the recipes on Ground Leaf that call for stock, or you can turn it into a broth by adding salt and any desired seasonings and then sip on it, particularly if you’re feeling under the weather.

What about cost? Produce is sooooo expensive!

We did a cost analysis using this VEGETABLE STOCK recipe. Produce was purchased in Santa Monica, CA (an expensive city) at Whole Foods (an expensive grocery store) and all organic (just racking up the price now). The entire receipt came out to \$28.54. We were able to make 3 batches of stock; 36 cups of stock total. We had a few leftover carrots, celery, and garlic cloves from our haul and plenty more peppercorns, bay leaves, and fresh herbs leftover. Breaking down the actual cost of what was used, each cup of stock cost **\$0.40**. A 4-cup (32oz) carton of organic stock at the same grocery store that the produce was purchased is anywhere between **\$2.99 - \$4.29**. So the homemade version is about half of the lowest price option. If you’d rather work the math based on the total check-out price of the receipt, then you’re still playing a winning game...in that case each cup of stock works out to \$.79; making a 4-cup total of \$3.17. That’s only slightly more than the cheapest organic boxed option, and still far less than the highest price option.



Entire grocery haul

	Paid	Per Unit	Per Batch
Onions	3.99	0.67	1.34
Celery	1.99	0.18	0.54
Carrots	1.99	0.17	0.34
Leeks	2.93	0.98	0.98
Garlic cloves	0.78	0.13	0.12
Parsley*	1.50	0.15	0.15
Rosemary	2.99	0.23	0.46
Thyme*	2.99	0.30	0.30
Bay Leaves	3.99	0.17	0.34
Black Peppercorns	5.49	0.27	0.27
	Total per batch		4.84
	Total per cup		0.40

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I've heard of people using scraps to make their vegetable stock, wouldn't that make it essentially free if I'm using something that would have otherwise been trash?

Of course!

However, here at Ground Leaf we follow the 5 stock recipes as written to ensure that our recipe testing is accurate. But we've definitely heard of the "freezer bag method" of making stock where people keep a gallon ziplock bag in their freezer, add all their scraps that would have been trash and when it gets full dump it in the pressure cooker with water. If you use this method and it works for you then that's great! You just might want to experiment with what scraps work best. For instance, some people find the skins of carrots to be very bitter, and if you are one of those people you probably don't want to make vegetable water out of a disagreeable ingredient, so skip the freezer bag and head those skins straight to the compost or trash. Are the ends of your onions really dirty? Dirty veggies made dirty stock. Are the skins on your onions looking a little sad but the onion within is still good? There are considerable positive opinions about onion skins on The Google, but if yours aren't looking so hot we wouldn't suggest using them this time around.

Freeze It

As mentioned earlier frozen stock is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. When getting home late from work, school or a trip, defrosting a small portion of stock can make for a quick and easy meal. We like using these freezer safe containers in one, two, or three* cup servings. The two cup container fits perfectly in this two cup* Pyrex measuring cup filled with hot water to defrost. Most recipes with the pressure cooker won't require defrosting the entire portion of stock as the process of getting to pressure will finish the defrosting process. We generally defrost long enough to get the frozen stock away from the edges of the container and then toss it in the pressure cooker along with the other recipe ingredients.

*See Ground Leaf Amazon store for these recommendations: <http://astore.amazon.com/grolea-20>

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How long does it really take to make homemade stock?

Prep time: Really just as long as it takes you to chop the veggies and pull together any other ingredients like bay leaves, some herbs, etc. We do recommend chopping your vegetables rather small to leach as much flavor into the water.

Time to pressure: When you fill the pressure cooker as full as you will for a stock it will take much longer to come to pressure than when cooking something that only fills the cooker 1/4 or 1/2 full. Be prepared for it to take up to 30 minutes just to come to pressure.*

Time at pressure: Four of the stock recipes are 30 minutes and one is 15 minutes.*

Time for pressure release: This can take up to 45 minutes, again because the machine is so full. We recommend letting the pressure release naturally for the flavors to continue to develop and because releasing the pressure when your machine is so full can clog the valve.*

Time to strain: About 10 minutes to strain and place in containers.

*This cumulative hour and forty-five minutes of time is completely hands off time that will not require you to be in the kitchen or monitor in any way.

Ground Leaf doesn't recommend using the following foods for stock making as they can contribute an unsatisfactory taste and/or color.

Cruciferous vegetables (such as bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, radish, turnip, and rutabaga), cilantro, beets, and carrot skins.