

The Foundations of Good Soups

There is no mystery attached to the making of broths. The basic method is the same, whether you make the broth with meat, poultry, vegetables or fish: simply simmer the ingredients in water until they have yielded their flavours to the liquid. In each case, the fragrant broth that is produced can either be served as a soup in its own right or used as the foundation of another soup.

Indeed, broths are so fundamental to soup-making that you should choose only the best ingredients and exercise scrupulous care in their preparation. The ingredients for a meat broth (*below, left; recipe, page 164*) should contribute a mellow flavour and a smooth body to the liquid. The main ingredient must be a stewing cut of beef, such as shin, which has flavour to

spare and enough natural gelatine to thicken the broth slightly. Additional flavour and gelatine are provided by a fresh, leftover chicken carcass, some chicken trimmings, a piece of veal flank and a veal knuckle bone. Some recipes call for the inclusion of beef bones, but these, unlike veal bones, would add little extra flavour or gelatine, while taking up valuable space in the cooking pot.

Aromatic vegetables and a mixture of herbs round out the flavour of the broth. The proportion of vegetables to meat is a matter of personal choice. Some cooks add a single carrot and an onion for discreet aromatic support; others prefer the fuller flavour and perceptible edge of sweetness that is contributed by additional vegetables. If you wish to add garlic to the broth, use unpeeled cloves or a whole, unpeeled head; peeled garlic cloves would cook to a

purée that would make the broth cloudy.

To perfume the liquid, stick two or three whole cloves in the onion and add the classic herb combination of parsley, bay leaf and thyme. Since broths are strained after cooking, you can leave the herbs loose. Or for easy retrieval, wrap them in muslin, celery stalks or leek leaves to form a bouquet garni.

To make a chicken broth (*below, centre left; recipe, page 164*), replace the mixture of meats with a trussed boiling fowl; a roasting chicken lacks both the flavour and gelatine of the older bird. A vegetable broth (*below, centre right; recipe, page 163*) includes the usual aromatic vegetables, but is supplemented with leafy vegetables such as lettuce and cabbage, for extra flavour. Chop or slice the vegeta-

