

Two More Ways to Use Meat

When making a meat-based soup, either choice or circumstance may lead you to vary the customary process of poaching only raw ingredients. To intensify the flavour and colour, for example, you can give the meat and aromatic vegetables an initial browning in an oven, as demonstrated here with oxtail soup (*right; recipe, page 117*). Or you can improvise an original, quickly made soup with leftover cooked meats. Both of these variations can be applied to almost any cut of meat or any kind of poultry or game. However, do not use any liver; it would turn dry and bitter with long cooking.

The first step, when producing any browned-meat soup, is to roast the meat with the aromatics for about 30 minutes in a hot oven. The surface juices of the meat will coagulate and form a glaze, and the natural sugar in the vegetables will caramelize their cut surfaces. When the meat and vegetables are transferred to a soup pot for poaching—a 4-hour process in the case of fibrous but flavour-rich oxtail—the glaze and caramel will dissolve into the broth, surrendering extra flavour to the liquid and turning it a rich, brown colour. Both effects are intensified by adding chopped tomatoes for the last few minutes of cooking. After cooking, the oxtail meat is removed from the bones, cut into bite-size pieces, and returned to the broth. The bones themselves are discarded, as are the exhausted and tasteless aromatics.

When making a soup from already cooked meats, the cook has a free hand to use leftovers singly or in practically any combination available. The cooked meats—including any bones and juices—are put to simmer in water with raw aromatic and leaf vegetables. By the time the vegetables are cooked, the meat will be melting into the soup. Tender garnish vegetables—such as peas, beans or courgettes—can be added near the end of cooking. If leftover cooked vegetables are to be included, they should be reheated in the soup for only a brief time.

Browning Oxtails for a Rich, Dark Broth



1 Preparation for the oven. Choose a vessel that can be used both in the oven and on top of the stove. Line it with chopped vegetables—here, carrots, onions and celery. Trim and halve 1 or 2 oxtails and lay them on the vegetables. For extra body, add a veal knuckle. Put the pan, uncovered, in an oven preheated to 240°C (475°F or Mark 9).



2 Starting the broth. After 30 minutes, when the meat and vegetables are well browned, take the pan out of the oven. Transfer the meat to a large saucepan (*above*); cover the meat with water and bring it very slowly to the boil. Spoon off the copious scum that rises. Add a little cold water and continue heating and skimming until the liquid is clear.

Extracting Fresh Goodness from Leftover Meat



1 Assembling the meats. Collect all the suitable leftovers you have. The basic ingredients for the soup shown here are roast beef, a roast goose carcass, their roasting juices, raw goose giblets and cooked pork-chop bones. Cut the meats into small chunks and slice the giblets. Half fill a large cooking pot with water or leftover vegetable cooking water.



2 Filling the soup pot. Prepare the fresh aromatic and leaf vegetables—here, onions, carrots, a turnip, cabbage, lettuce and sorrel. Thickly slice the aromatics. Trim the ribs from the cabbage, then cut all the leaves into a *chiffonade* (*page 14*). Put the bones, meats and vegetables into the pot (*above*); add salt and a bouquet garni.