

Salt and Serenity

Roasted Chicken Soup with Perfect Matzoh Balls

Serves 6-8

The parsnips in the soup are optional. My mom always put them in her soup, so I do too!

12 cups roasted chicken stock (**recipe below**)
1 whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces
4 pounds chicken bones
2 medium onions, peeled and quartered
2 large parsnips, peeled and cut into 2 inch lengths (optional)
4 large carrots, peeled and cut into 2 inch lengths
2 celery stalks (with leaves), cut into 2 inch lengths
2 parsley stems (not the leaves)
10 black whole peppercorns
2 dried bay leaves
Salt and black pepper to taste
Cooked matzoh balls (**recipe below**)
Fresh parsley or dill for garnish

1. Pour chicken stock into a large stockpot. Add chicken bones and whole cut up chicken and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down to low and, using a slotted spoon, skim off the foam that has risen to the top. Add vegetables, bay leaf, parsley stems and whole peppercorns. Partially cover pot with lid, so that some steam can escape..
2. Let soup simmer for about 2 hours.
3. Strain the soup in a cheesecloth lined strainer and transfer it to a clean pot. I love the flavour of the cooked carrots, so I always save them to serve in the soup. Using 2 forks, remove skin and bones from chicken breasts and thighs and shred the meat into bite sized pieces. Discard all bones and other vegetables.
4. Put reserved carrots and shredded chicken into a covered container in the fridge. Let pot of strained soup sit on the counter until cooled a little bit. Cover pot and chill in fridge overnight. The next day, remove layer of hardened fat off the top. Save it if you are making matzoh balls.

5. Bring cold soup to a boil. Turn down heat add reserved carrots and chicken, cooked matzoh balls and simmer for about 5 minutes, Add salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle with fresh parsley and/or dill.

Roasted Chicken Stock

4 pounds raw chicken bones (backs, feet, ribs, wings, necks), rinsed under cold running water, patted dry
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 large onions, chopped
2 large carrots, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 leek, cleaned well and chopped
2 to 3 sprigs fresh thyme
8 to 10 whole peppercorns
3 bay leaves
16 cups cold water

1. Preheat oven to 425° F.
2. Add 1 tablespoon vegetable oil to large roasting pan. Add bones and roast on the lower rack of oven until deep golden brown, about 40-45 minutes. Stir often to ensure even browning.
3. While bones are roasting, get vegetables ready for roasting. On a large baking sheet, mix remaining tablespoon of oil with onions, carrots, celery and leek. Spread out vegetables in a single layer and roast in oven until brown, about 30 minutes.
4. Transfer bones to an 8-quart stockpot. Add 16 cups cold water and bring to a boil. As soon as the water comes to a boil turn down the heat to low, skim off the scum that floats on top. Add the roasted vegetables, thyme, peppercorns and bay leaves
5. Simmer stock very gently, uncovered, for 2 hours. The liquid should barely bubble; if the stock boils it will be cloudy. And don't stir it or push down on the bones – that will make it cloudy too.
6. Strain liquid through a cheesecloth lined strainer and discard all the vegetables and bones. Refrigerate stock and remove layer of fat from the top. Use stock as needed, or freeze in small containers for a later use. Stock keeps well in the freezer for 4 months.

Perfect Matzoh Balls

Makes 12

Recipe adapted from the Manichewitz matzoh meal box.

2 large eggs
½ teaspoon kosher salt

1/2 cup Matzo Meal
2 tablespoons water or chicken stock
2 tablespoons chicken fat (schmaltz), melted and slightly cooled
2 tablespoons kosher salt (for cooking water)

1. In a medium sized bowl beat eggs with salt. Whisk in matzoh meal and water or chicken stock. Mix in chicken fat. Cover batter with plastic wrap and chill in fridge overnight.
2. Bring a large wide pot of water to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon of kosher salt to water.
3. Form matzoh balls; wet your hands and roll a generous tablespoon of dough between your palms to form a ball about 1 ½ inches in diameter.
4. Add matzoh balls to water. Turn down heat to a simmer. Cover pot and cook for about 45 minutes to an hour.
5. To check if matzoh balls are done, remove one from the pot and cut it in half. It should be the same colour all the way through. If not, continue cooking for a few more minutes.
6. Drain matzoh balls.

The matzoh balls can be made up to 3 days ahead. Store them in a single layer on a baking sheet and cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate