STOCKS, BROTHS, AND JUS: AN OVERVIEW

Chef Thomas Keller / Chapter Fifteen

MASTERCLASS

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"This is the base for everything else that you're going to do. And that's why it's so valuable to learn how to do this and so valuable to have it at home. It's a life changer."

CHAPTER REVIEW

Stocks are a commitment. They take time and effort. But they're essential building blocks in Chef Keller's restaurant kitchens. They can make a profound difference in your kitchen, too. Here, Chef Keller lays out his stock fundamentals, from the ingredients and techniques involved in stock-making to the broader applications of stocks themselves. He starts with definitions. As a general rule, a stock is made from bones, where a broth is made from meat and other protein trimmings. Neither is to be confused with a jus, which is made with pan-drippings from a roast. The cookware you'll use will depend on the type of stock you're making. The longer the cooking time—roasted veal stock, for instance, is far more time-intensive than chicken or fish stock—the larger the pot you'll need.

Chef Keller starts his stocks with a mirepoix, a mixture of aromatic vegetables that are ultimately discarded. Classically, a mirepoix includes onions, carrots, and celery. In Chef Keller's kitchens, he prefers to use onions, leeks, and carrots, as celery has a very strong flavor and he finds that leeks give better sweetness. He uses a variety of bones and tendons, cut to expose as much surface area as possible; the gelatin from them imparts viscosity and flavor. Stocks are often made with roasted bones, a traditional approach that adds flavor and color. Chef Keller notes those benefits but says that he does not use roasted bones for stocks in his restaurants. He finds his stocks to be more versatile without the roasted-bone flavor. For color, Chef Keller says you can use brûléed, or burnt, onions, and tomatoes.

In this introduction, Chef Keller focuses largely on two stocks: chicken and veal. In subsequent chapters, he will show you how to make them as well as how to use them in sauces. Stock-making in restaurants is often different from stock-making at home, and not just in the quantities produced. At The French Laundry, it takes three days to make veal stock. But Chef Keller has developed a far less time-intensive method for home cooks using a pressure cooker that produces wonderful results. Making this quicker veal stock is still a commitment. But it's an invaluable pantry item, Chef Keller says, one that will change the way you cook more than any other.