Soups / France

Brown Veal Stock

Fond brun de veau — the backbone of the classical French kitchen. Veal bones roasted to a deep walnut brown, lacquered with tomato, married to caramelised mirepoix and coaxed for hours into a glossy, gelatinous stock the colour of old amber that sets to a wobble when cold.

Time 540 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 % Veal bones (knuckles, marrow & neck, sawn into 5-8 cm pieces)
- ☐ 20 % Mirepoix (carrot, onion, celery, roughly chopped)
- ☐ 4 % Tomato paste
- ☐ 250 % Cold water (enough to cover by 5 cm)
- ☐ 10 % Dry red wine or water (for deglazing the roasting tray)
- ☐ 1 % Bouquet garni (thyme, bay leaf, parsley stalks)
- ☐ 0.3 % Black peppercorns (lightly cracked)
- ☐ 2 % Garlic head (halved across the equator, optional)

Let's make it.

01 Heat the oven to 220°C / 425°F. Spread the veal bones in a single layer in a heavy roasting tray and roast for 45-60 minutes, turning once or twice, until they are an even deep walnut brown and the marrow is bubbling. This Maillard browning is the entire colour and depth of a brown stock — pale bones make pale, weak stock.

02 Scatter the mirepoix over the browned bones, dot the tomato paste among them, and return the tray to the oven for 20-25 minutes. Roast until the vegetables are softened and caramelised at the edges and the tomato paste has darkened from bright red to brick — this 'pinçage' of the paste cooks out its raw acidity and deepens the colour and savour of the finished stock.

03 Lift the bones and vegetables into a tall stockpot. Set the empty roasting tray over a burner, pour in the wine or water, and bring to a simmer, scraping with a wooden spoon to dissolve every bit of the precious brown fond. Pour this dark deglazing liquid over the bones in the pot — none of that flavour should be wasted.

04 Add cold water to cover the bones by about 5 cm, then bring slowly to a bare simmer — starting cold and heating gently keeps the stock clear. Skim the grey foam and fat that rise in the first 20 minutes. Tuck in the bouquet garni, peppercorns and garlic, then hold the gentlest simmer (a bubble breaking the surface every second or two) uncovered for 6-8 hours, topping up with water to keep the bones submerged. Never let it boil, or the fat emulsifies and the stock turns cloudy.

05 Ladle the stock gently through a fine sieve lined with damp muslin into a clean pot, disturbing the bones as little as possible so the sediment stays behind. Discard the bones and aromatics. If you want greater depth, simmer the strained stock to reduce it by up to half. Cool quickly, then chill — the fat will set on top to lift off, and the stock beneath should set to a soft, trembling jelly.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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