Soups / Vietnam

Pho Broth

The soul of pho bo — beef bones simmered for hours into a crystal-clear amber broth, perfumed with charred onion and ginger and a fistful of toasted spice, then balanced on a knife's edge of fish sauce. Clean, aromatic, and deceptively deep.

Time 360 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 % Beef marrow and knuckle bones
- ☐ 30 % Beef brisket or chuck (whole piece)
- ☐ 12 % Yellow onions (halved, charred)
- ☐ 6 % Fresh ginger (whole, charred)
- ☐ 2 % Whole spice (star anise, cinnamon stick, cloves, coriander seed, fennel seed)
- ☐ 4 % Fish sauce (nuoc mam)
- ☐ 2 % Yellow rock sugar
- ☐ 1 % Fine sea salt
- ☐ 600 % Cold water

Let's make it.

01 Cover the bones and meat with cold water in a large pot and bring to a rolling boil over high heat. Boil hard for 5-7 minutes — a gray, foamy scum will erupt to the surface. Dump everything into a colander, discard the cloudy water, and scrub each bone under running water to remove every trace of coagulated blood and grit. This brutal first wash is the single most important step for a clear broth.

02 Hold the halved onions and whole ginger directly over an open flame, or place cut-side down in a dry cast-iron skillet over high heat. Char until the surfaces are blackened and blistered, 8-10 minutes, turning so every face takes color. Don't be timid — you want genuine black char, not just golden. Rinse off any loose ash under the tap and leave the rest.

03 Toast the star anise, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, and fennel in a dry skillet over medium heat, shaking constantly, for 3-4 minutes until fragrant and the seeds begin to pop. Don't let them smoke. Tie the spices in a small muslin bag or cheesecloth bundle so they can be lifted out cleanly later.

04 Cover the clean bones and meat with fresh cold water and bring to a bare simmer — never a boil. Add the charred onion and ginger and the spice bag. Hold at the gentlest simmer, surface barely shivering, for 4-6 hours. Skim foam and surface fat patiently every 20-30 minutes for the first hour. Pull the brisket out at 90 minutes once it is tender (save it for slicing into the bowls); let the bones keep going. Top up with hot water if the level drops below the bones.

05 Return the strained broth to the pot over low heat. Season with fish sauce, rock sugar, and salt, adding in stages and tasting as you go. The goal is a savory broth with a whisper of sweetness and a deep umami hum — it should taste slightly stronger than you'd sip on its own, because rice noodles and raw beef will dilute it in the bowl. Adjust until balanced.

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