Soups / France

Vegetable Stock

A clear, golden bouillon de légumes built on the classic French aromatic trinity — onion, carrot, and celery sweated gently into sweetness, then coaxed with leek, tomato, and herbs into a clean, fragrant broth that tastes of the garden, not the spice rack. No browning, no salt, no muddle: just bright vegetable essence, ready to carry a risotto, a soup, or a braise.

Time 75 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 30 g Neutral oil or unsalted butter
- ☐ 200 g Yellow onion, peel on, halved
- ☐ 150 g Carrot, scrubbed, roughly chopped
- ☐ 120 g Celery stalks with leaves, chopped
- ☐ 120 g Leek, white and pale green, split and washed
- ☐ 100 g Ripe tomato or 1 tbsp tomato paste
- ☐ 20 g Garlic cloves, crushed, skin on
- ☐ 15 g Bouquet garni (parsley stems, thyme, bay leaf)
- ☐ 3 g Black peppercorns, lightly cracked
- ☐ 2000 g Cold water

Let's make it.

01 Warm the oil or butter in a heavy stockpot over medium-low heat. Add the onion, carrot, celery, leek, and crushed garlic and stir to coat. Sweat gently for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring often, until the vegetables soften and smell sweet and fragrant. The goal is to draw out moisture and develop sweetness WITHOUT color — keep the heat low. Browning here would tint and muddy a stock meant to stay clean and bright.

02 Stir in the tomato (or tomato paste) and let it cook for a minute to lose its raw edge and lend a gentle savory backbone. Add the bouquet garni and cracked peppercorns, then pour in the cold water — starting cold helps draw flavor out as it heats. The water should cover the vegetables by an inch or two. Bring slowly up toward a simmer; do not let it boil.

03 Hold the pot at the barest simmer — a few bubbles lazily breaking the surface — for 40 to 45 minutes, uncovered or just barely cracked. Skim any foam that rises in the first ten minutes. Resist cooking it longer: unlike meat stock, vegetable stock turns dull, bitter, and cabbage-like if over-extracted. Taste at 40 minutes; when the broth tastes sweet, rounded, and clearly of vegetables, it is done.

04 Set a fine-mesh sieve (lined with a layer of cheesecloth for a crystal-clear stock) over a clean bowl or second pot. Ladle the stock through rather than dumping it — disturbing the settled solids less keeps it clearer. Let the vegetables drip on their own; do NOT press them, as pressing forces cloudy pulp and bitterness into the broth. Cool quickly in an ice bath, then refrigerate up to 4 days or freeze for months.

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