

Chicken Broth & Cooked Chicken

Making your own broth and cooked chicken is a great way to save money, reduce sodium, and increase flavor. A 10-pound bag of chicken leg quarters has 9 to 11 quarters and yields about 9 cups cooked chicken plus about 8 cups broth.

HERE'S WHAT TO DO:

1. Buy chicken leg quarters.

These are often on sale (a 10-pound bag sometimes sells for less than \$5) and have a higher proportion of meat to bone than chicken backs or wings.

2. Remove and discard skin and visible fat if you have time.

This action reduces the amount of fat in the broth and means less work later. You do not need to rinse the chicken because any bacteria in the chicken will be killed as it cooks. However, cutting boards and utensils must be washed immediately and thoroughly with soapy water so bacteria isn't transferred to food that will not be cooked.

3. Place as many chicken pieces as will comfortably fit in your slow cooker or largest cooking pan.

Chicken will cook more evenly if not packed into the container. You also want space for the broth.

4. Add cut-up onion, celery, carrot, or other vegetables.

These add flavor without adding sodium. Use about 2 cups in a 5- or 6-quart slow cooker and more or less in a larger or smaller cooking pot.

5. Add 1 tablespoon mixed seasoning (parsley, thyme, bay leaf, peppercorns).

To add flavor without adding sodium, experiment with other seasonings you have on hand.

6. Add cold water to cover chicken.

Use less water for a richer broth. Add more water to make a larger amount of broth.

7. Cook until meat is done enough to slip off bones.

If using a slow cooker, cover and cook on low heat for 6 to 8 hours or on high heat for about 4 hours. If cooking on a burner, heat to boiling, then reduce heat, cover, and simmer about 1 hour. Simmering allows the meat and broth to absorb more flavor.

8. Lift meat and bones out of the broth and place in a covered container.

Refrigerate until cool enough to handle. Remove meat and place in 1- or 2-cup containers or freezer-weight plastic bags. Discard bones.

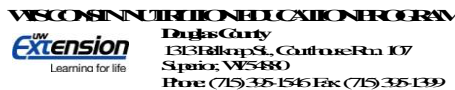
9. Pour broth and vegetables into a colander or strainer set over a large bowl.

Discard vegetables. Pour strained broth into 1- or 2-cup containers; cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Fat doesn't mix with water so it settles on top as the broth cools. Scrape off the fat layer, wrap it in paper towels or newspapers, and discard. You'll have less fat if you removed the skin and visible fat before cooking.

10. Label the meat and broth containers with date and amount.

Store in refrigerator for use within 2 days or in freezer for use within 3 months. Dated labels make it easier to find and use stored food.

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