

Chicken soup for the soul

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Folklore has it that chicken soup can be a remedy for whatever ails you. From colds, asthma and the flu to hangovers and hemorrhoids, chicken soup has been a touted prescription for healing. Ancient Egypt had references to the benefits of chicken broth, as did the early Persian 10th century physician Avicenna and 12th century physician Maimonides. Current history refers endearingly to chicken soup as ‘Jewish Penicillin’. There is reason for its claimed curative properties.

Meat stocks, if properly prepared, are extremely nutritious. They contain minerals of bone, cartilage, marrow and vegetables. When wine or vinegar is added into the cooking, they work to draw minerals, especially calcium, magnesium and potassium, into the broth. As the soup ingredients warm in the water, their fibers open slowly, releasing nutritive qualities as well as flavor.

Also extracted from the stewing bone is gelatin with its own list of beneficial effects. Gelatin aids digestion by attracting digestive juices and allowing bodies to more fully utilize proteins that are consumed. When sick, the more easily that we can absorb and utilize nutrients, the better.

Added benefits are that the sipping of the warm soup can also clear the sinuses because of the steam ventilating into the nasal passages, serving as a natural decongestant. Additionally, cold and flu viruses can only survive within a narrow temperature range. Sipping hot liquids can raise the ambient temperature in the nose and throat above this threshold.

Garlic adds further warming properties as well as its well known antibiotic and anti-fungal qualities. Ginger is known to help in nausea, vomiting, morning sickness, bronchitis and aches.

At the very least, chicken soup is a warming comfort food.

The following is an excellent basic chicken stock recipe inspired by Sally Fallon, author of *Nourishing Traditions*.

Cleansing Chicken Soup

1 whole chicken (free range, pastured or organic), cut into pieces
2 T. raw apple cider vinegar
4 quarts filtered water
2 large onions, coarsely chopped
4 carrots, coarsely chopped
4 celery stalks, coarsely chopped
4 inches ginger, grated
5 cloves garlic
4 T. organic, unrefined coconut, olive or sesame oil
1 bunch parsley

Place chicken in stainless steel pot with water, vinegar, oil and all vegetables except parsley. Let stand 30 minutes to 1 hour. Bring to a boil, removing the scum that rises to the top. Cover, lower the heat and simmer for 8-24 hours. The longer you cook the stock, the richer and more flavorful it will be. About 10 minutes before finishing the stock, add the parsley. This will add additional mineral ions to the stock.

Remove the chicken, letting it cool and then removing the meat from the carcass. Strain the stock into a large bowl and reserve in your refrigerator until the fat rises to the top and congeals. Skim off this fat and reserve the stock in covered containers in the refrigerator or freezer. Soup stock kept in the refrigerator should be consumed within three days.

When consumed as a clear liquid, sipping on the hearty broth is much easier. You may chop the chicken

meat and add to the soup or save for other uses such as chicken salads, enchiladas, sandwiches or curries.

Variations on this theme are encouraged: 1) Add a variety of vegetables - zucchini, green beans, tomatoes, etc. 2) Leave the vegetables and chicken in for a hearty, healthy, fiber rich, satisfying meal 3) Give variety to the seasoning and healing potential by adding lemon and turmeric. Curcumin, the ingredient in turmeric that gives it its yellow color has anti-inflammatory qualities. 4) Add cayenne pepper ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp per soup pot) for its sinus clearing qualities.

At the least you will be warm and comforted. Bon appetite!

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