



THE WELLNESS MAMALAH

BY JENNIFER WISE

Comforting Heat

It's pretty cold outside and it feels even chillier when I do my best to shuttle everyone to the car each morning. Hot chocolate in travel mugs always helps. Sadly, though, several of my children have issues with dairy.

It got to the point where the stomach issues and eczema were getting out of hand and, these days we've

cut out all dairy from our home. It has helped a lot. But the kids (and I) wanted something warm to drink on the way to school. Enter chicken soup.

The health benefits of chicken soup have been well documented: it bolsters the immune system, fights viral infections and reduces inflammation. Can I prove it? No. But I do know that when we eat a lot of chick-

en soup, we get colds way less often. And if we do get a cold, it lasts fewer days than it otherwise would have.

I know, it doesn't sound that appetizing of a way to start your day. But as it turns out, there are a huge number of people around the world who start each day with warm soup and, since we are dairy-free, being fleishigs all day is not a concern. At first, my kids, huge chicken soup lovers, thought it was very weird (because it is!) but, over time, they've bought into it and, if I happen to run out, they will ask where their soup is. If you can learn to love some morning soup, your kids will likely want some too.

Since we're talking chicken soup, I feel like I might as well be honest and admit that I did not have the first clue as to how to make chicken soup before I got married. My grandmother always made it by the gallon and handed it out. But how did she make her magic? Since I was a little girl, I kind of always thought that maybe she squeezed the chicken. But how could that be? And how hard did she squeeze? And, ugh, I love chicken soup, but there was no way I was squeezing a chicken. And so I was floored, really floored, when I learned that there was water involved. There, now my soul is bare and we can all be friends.

Everyone has a chicken soup recipe. I'm sure yours is delicious,

so go ahead and make a big pot. But don't throw away the chicken bones because we're going to make a bone broth together. And if you're not ready right now, store the bones in a zippered plastic bag in the fridge for a few days, or, if you aren't ready to make bone broth for a good long while, go ahead and freeze them.

Okay, everybody stop and take a big deep collective breath. Bone broth? What is she talking about? Have you heard of bone broth? It's like chicken soup that has been taken to the next level. Simmering bones over a low heat for hours creates one of the most nutritious and healing foods you can make; it's right up there with fermented vegetables in the health-enhancing category. Bone broth can be used to make rice, steam vegetables, as a base for other soups or stews or you can drink it plain. It can also be frozen – I like to freeze it in one-cup portions so I can pull out as much as I need for any given recipe.

The secret to bone broth is using a splash of apple cider vinegar. Apple cider vinegar, because it's an acid, extracts minerals from the bones and into the broth. The same goes for rice vinegar, but plain white vinegar will likely taste too harsh because of its stronger flavor.

There are several ways to make bone broth, including using a slow cooker. I prefer making it on the stovetop.

Bone Broth:

Bones from the chicken soup
4 peeled carrots
1 onion
3 stalks of celery
Sea salt to taste
1-2 tbsp real apple cider vinegar
Chicken feet, if you're brave (I'm not and I don't think I ever will be)

Directions

Add all the ingredients into the pot. Cover the contents with water, bring to a boil, skim the surface and reduce to a very low gentle simmer. Let barely simmer, uncovered, for 12 hours. Be sure to check on it every so often and if the water level gets too low, add enough to cover the bones and vegetables. I like to start a pot very early in the morning so that by the time bedtime rolls around, the broth will have cooled enough to allow for refrigeration.

Once the broth has cooked, use a slotted spoon to remove as many

of the bones and vegetables as you can. Discard them. Once the broth has cooled slightly, it's time to strain and get rid of the rest of the small pieces of chicken or vegetables that might be left.

In the sink, place a pot that is large enough to hold all the broth. Set a mesh strainer over the pot and, using a ladle, carefully (the broth is still very hot!) ladle the broth through the strainer. Cover the pot and store it in the fridge over night. By morning, the broth will have gelled and will be somewhat jiggly. Now is a great time to divide into portions for the freezer. Storing some in the fridge is also a good idea so they can easily be used for the next few days. On the off chance that it does not gel, don't panic! It's still amazing, full of wonderfulness and can be used in any way that gelled bone broth can be used.

Just a note: Using all organic and free-range chicken is a wonderful and lofty goal and one day I'd like to live up it. But that day is not

today because those little chickens are pricey! Every once in a long while I will grab a few chickens that have lived an exceptionally spa-like life, but it doesn't happen often and, honestly, we all have to do the best we can with what we have. If you can swing organic chicken and work it into your budget, more power to you, but for the rest of us, I really believe that the medicinal benefits of chicken soup and bone broth still exist using regular chickens. And

that's what we're all after here – good health for ourselves and our families.

