

Pat Crocker, a culinary herbalist, has authored a unique but practical cookbook called Healing Herbs Cookbook. The recipes are not only tasty, they use ingredients that are rich in elements that keep us healthy. As the season for colds and flu's approach, this power-house stock should be a staple in your refrigerator. It can be sipped as a tea with a little honey added, stock for a savory soup, or in any recipe that calls for water.

The roasted vegetables are the basics of this recipe but the other ingredients can be varied, depending on what's available and your tastes. Play with it and see what you like. Here's to your health!

Healing Vegetable Stock

1 leek, cleaned and sliced in half length-wise
1 onion, peeled and cut into chunks
1 unpeeled carrot, cleaned and cut into chunks
5 cloves garlic, peeled
2 Tbsp. olive oil

Place leeks, onions and garlic on a baking pan and drizzle with the olive oil. Bake at 400 for 30-40 minutes or until soft and brown.

8 cups water
1/2 head cabbage (or substitute 1 whole head chinese cabbage), washed and cut into chunks
1 packed cup beet or young dandelion greens
3-4 stalks celery, cut into chunks
1 unpeeled apple, cut into chunks
1 bay leaf
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper (you need to feel the heat so increase it as you can stand it. 1/2 tsp. is comfortable for salsa lovers)
5 peppercorns (cloves, allspice berries optional)
1 bunch fresh thyme
2 sprigs fresh sage
2-3 tablespoons culinary lavender
1-2 inch piece ginger (ginseng, burdock root, dandelion root optional)

In a large pot, bring water to a boil. Add roasted vegetables and all remaining ingredients. Cover pot and reduce heat, simmering at least 45 minutes. Turn off heat and allow to cool a bit. Strain out and discard vegetables. (To release the maximum amount of nutrients, remove ginger and herb leaves and stems, then process in a blender before straining.)

Store in the refrigerator or freezer in well sealed serving size containers to retain nutrients. Keep in the refrigerator only a couple of days, otherwise freeze for later use.

Options for additional benefits:

sea herbs (such as dulse, kelp, mori), alfalfa, chamomile, nettles, astagalus, mushrooms, burdock root, tomato, spinach, broccoli.