

Taking Stock: the Health and Hype of Bone Broth

By Melanie Peters | August 30, 2018

There are many advantages to making homemade soup: it's a great way to get rid of leftovers, to sneak in some otherwise-unlikeable-veggies for those picky eaters in your family, and, of course, nothing says comfort quite like a bowl of "Jewish penicillin." When the weather starts to cool and noses start to sniffle, soup is often what we turn to for relief.

Christine Zoumas, RD, senior dietitian and director of the [Healthy Eating Program at Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Health](#), says there's lots to love about soup. "It's a moist method of cooking, which is perfect for tougher cuts of meat, plus water soluble vitamins that are often lost in the cooking process are retained. And phytochemicals, like lycopene in tomatoes and carotenoids in carrots, are not only retained, they become more bio-available in our bodies.



"Soups offer us a different way of consuming vegetables and whole grains, which are an important

part of a healthy diet. And one bowl equals one meal, so it's easy to consume and there are fewer dishes to wash!"

While there's no doubt that soup offers comfort — and there may be something to the psychological boost that a warm soup can confer [that aids in healing](#) — that doesn't mean that soup is a cure-all. Or is it?

The latest food-as-medicine craze that has everyone buzzing is bone broth: From weight loss, to inflammation to an anti-aging fighter, drinking bone broth seems to be the answer to everything that may ail us. But is bone broth really more healthful than other soups? And how is bone broth different from regular broth? We put these questions to Zoumas to help clear up the mystery surrounding this magical elixir and she shares a favorite soup recipe from her nutrition and cooking classes for cancer patients and cancer survivors.

First, is there a difference between stock and broth?

There are subtle differences between broth and stock. Broth is usually referred to as a liquid that has had meat cooked in it. It's made by simmering meat (sometimes with bones) and seasonings for up to two hours.

Stock is made by simmering bones (sometimes with meat) with a mirepoix (onion, carrot and celery) in water. Stock is often not seasoned and cooked from two to six hours.

Bone broths are being touted as helping everything from joint pain to gut inflammation to improving your skin. Is there any truth to these claims?

Many of these claims are based on the idea that drinking a collagen-rich broth goes directly into the body as collagen, but this is not supported by science.

When you consume something with collagen, it is digested into amino acids (i.e., broken apart) and then your body gets to choose how to use those amino acids. It could become something else your body needs because amino acids are the building blocks for protein, which can be turned into enzymes, body tissue, something for your immune system, whatever your body needs.

However, you can't expect that consuming something rich in collagen means it converts back to collagen, which is why the claim that bone broth can improve skin health, for example, is unsupported.

Are there reasons to be cautious about consuming too much bone broth?

Too much of anything is not a good a thing. The nutritional content of bone broth would depend on how much fat is left in the broth, the amount of sodium and whether or not it contains vegetables. A low fat, low sodium, vegetable-rich bone broth would definitely be a healthy meal.

Finally, what are some keys to making a healthful soup?

Use ingredients that you enjoy — you won't want to eat it if it's full of stuff you don't like — and be creative with an eye to nutrition. Try using lower-sodium options, especially if using a premade

broth or stock, and use plenty of herbs and spices, salting “to taste” at the end. Also, don’t be afraid to use frozen or canned vegetables as many frozen vegetables contain more nutrients than their “out of season” counterparts. When using canned vegetables, just make sure they’re low- or no-sodium.



Quinoa and Vegetable Fall Stew (Serves 6)

- → 2 tablespoons olive oil
- → 1 yellow onion, chopped
- → 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and chopped
- → 4 large garlic cloves, minced
- → 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- → 1 1/2 tablespoons ground cumin
- → 1 1/2 teaspoons ground coriander
- → 6 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- → 1 pound red potatoes cut into 1/2 inch pieces
- → 3/4 cup of prewashed quinoa
- → 1 cup frozen corn
- → 3 Roma tomatoes, cored and chopped
- → 1 cup frozen peas
- → juice of one lime
- → salt and pepper to taste
- → In a large (4 quart), heavy bottomed pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and bell pepper and sauté until softened (about 7 minutes)
- → Add garlic, smoked paprika, cumin and coriander and stir to coat vegetables. Add broth and potatoes and bring liquid to a boil over high heat
- → Reduce heat to medium-low after reaching a boil and gently simmer for about 12 minutes
- → Add quinoa and corn and cook until quinoa is tender (about 9 minutes)
- → Add tomatoes and peas. Remove from heat and season with salt, pepper and lime juice. Serve with optional ingredients for garnish

Optional Ingredients

- → ripe avocado, peeled, seeded and cubed
 - → cilantro
 - → *queso cotija*
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