

Chicken and Dumplings for Mary

When I really want to make a nice dinner for Mary, I don't roll out the foie gras and caviar. I make a big pot of old-fashioned chicken and dumplings. Making the chicken stock permeates the house with delicious warm aroma making everything seem soft and comfortable. If you want to make a large batch of stock, freeze it in pints or quarts and keep it on hand for future projects. Nothing is better than having some good chicken stock in the freezer for a quick soup.

3 or 4 bone-in skin-on chicken breasts

Chicken Stock

- 2 C. Diced onions
- 5-6 ea. Cloves garlic, sliced thinly
- 2 C. Diced carrots
- 1 C. Celery, sliced into half moons
- 1 C. Celery Root, peeled and diced
- 2 # Red Bliss or small Yukon Gold potatoes, quartered
- 2 Tbs. Chopped fresh thyme

Salt and pepper

Dumplings

- 1 Place chicken in large pot. Cover with chicken stock and bring just to a simmer. Cook until chicken is just done. Remove to a plate and allow to cool.
- 2 Add all vegetables and thyme to stock. Season well with salt and pepper and add more stock if necessary. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cook until vegetables are done.
- 3 While vegetables are cooking, remove chicken meat from bones and shred or dice large. Add to pot when vegetables are cooked.
- 4 Spoon in dumplings while keeping pot at a simmer. When completed, allow to simmer for a few minutes. If broth becomes too thick for your taste, add a little more stock. Personally, I like it thicker. Also, check seasonings. Pepper and salt make a world of difference in a simple dish like this.
- 5 Scoop out two bowls and eat in front of the fireplace with some champagne and some crusty bread.

Chicken Stock

- 5 # Chicken necks and backs (a whole chicken or various pieces and parts work well enough)
 - 1 ea. Large onion, peeled and chopped
 - 1 ea. Carrot, peeled and copped
 - 2 stalks Celery, chopped
 - 3 head Garlic, split crossways
 - 1 tsp. Black peppercorns
 - 1 ea. Bay leaf
- Lots of sprigs of fresh thyme

1. Place chicken (organs are good too but not livers!) into stockpot.
2. Place onions, carrots, and celery into pot.
3. Place garlic and herbs in pot. Cover with cold water to 1" above ingredients and place pot on stove.
4. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to a minimal simmer. Skim fat and foam immediately! Cook 2 hours at a low simmer, skimming fat and foam regularly.
5. When done, skim fat and strain through a coarse mesh strainer. Strain again with a fine mesh strainer.

Dumplings

- 6 ea. Eggs, brought to room temperature
 - 1/2 # Butter softened to the point that it is partially melted (one stick)
 - 1 1/2 C. Flour
 - 2 Tbs. Chopped fresh thyme or rosemary (optional because I skip this when I want my small kids to eat them and don't want to freak them out with green stuff.)
- Salt and pepper

1. Whisk eggs lightly to break yolks. Add butter and incorporate well. If the butter is not very soft and beginning to melt and the eggs are not room temperature, this will be difficult to do. There may still remain little pieces of butter in the eggs. This is okay.
2. Add flour and seasonings and stir in gently. Do not over-work the dough. It should be soft and sticky, a little thicker than a batter but not as tight as a soft dough.
3. Place a small amount of dumpling dough onto a spoon and scrape two or three dumplings into the simmering pot with another spoon. When the dumplings float, allow them to cook a minute or two more. Remove and taste. If the dumpling falls apart, add a little more flour and stir it in gently. If the seasonings need to be adjusted, add salt and pepper.
4. Continue to scrape dumplings into pot. I like to make them the size I get when I scrape 4 or 5 off a large tablespoon.
5. Bring back to a simmer and allow to cook for a few minutes.