

WHERE TO BUY STOCK

# Please concentrate

A rich, aromatic and flavoursome stock will help cooks get the most out of a host of dishes, writes **John Newton**.

When I have the time, I throw a couple of chicken carcasses into cold water, add a few extra wings or legs (for the gelatine, to make the stock jelly), some celery, carrots, leeks and black peppercorns, bring it to the boil, skim and simmer it for a couple of hours and then strain and freeze it until I need it.

My homemade effort isn't had - certainly a lot better than many I tried in this quest for good commercial stock - but it's not great. A really great stock, prepared well and reduced carefully, is hard to do but it will make your risotto richer, your soups sensational and your braises brilliant. You can make stock from chicken, beef, veal, pork, vegetable or seafood (never throw away fish heads or prawn heads and shells - they make great stock).

Stock is the foundation for most of the sauces used in French cooking and many of the dishes in your favourite restaurant. That's why chefs make stock all the time. Walk into any good commercial kitchen and there'll always be a stock pot simmering on a stove. And I'm afraid what comes out of it will always be better than mine: deeper and richer in flavour with more of the essence of whatever it is they're using. It's the result of a combination of practice, time and ingredients.

One chef who knows a lot about this magical combination of skill and patience, Wayne Bowles, has begun making and selling chicken stock. The finished product includes all

the secrets he's learnt in 20 years of simmering, reducing, sniffing and tasting.

Bowles's is the only stock we found which is sold fresh, not frozen (not including the tinned and tetra pak stocks). Asked why, he says, "I like using stock in its gelatinous form. I'm a purist. But you can freeze it, some retailers do, and you're not going to lose much flavour. The pack carries fresh and frozen use-by dates." But when you see his stock, golden and wobbling, you'll want to use it fresh, too.

There's a fair bit of prepared stock around at the moment - here are five of the best that we have found.

## AC Butchery

Angela Colaiacomo makes her own beef stock (\$3.50 for 750g), a simple one with celery, onion and carrot. She reminded me of that terrific Italian way of serving pasta in *brodo* or in stock; cook spaghetti or tortellini in the stock and serve it as a soup. "Nothing better on a Sunday night," she says. Colaiacomo's is a cloudy stock with a light meat flavour - pleasant but without the big meatiness I was expecting. Like all the stocks tasted (except for the tinned Swanson, see Burlington Centre), it improved immeasurably with a good sprinkle of salt. AC also sells the Bowles stock.

174 Marion Street, Leichhardt, 9569 8667.

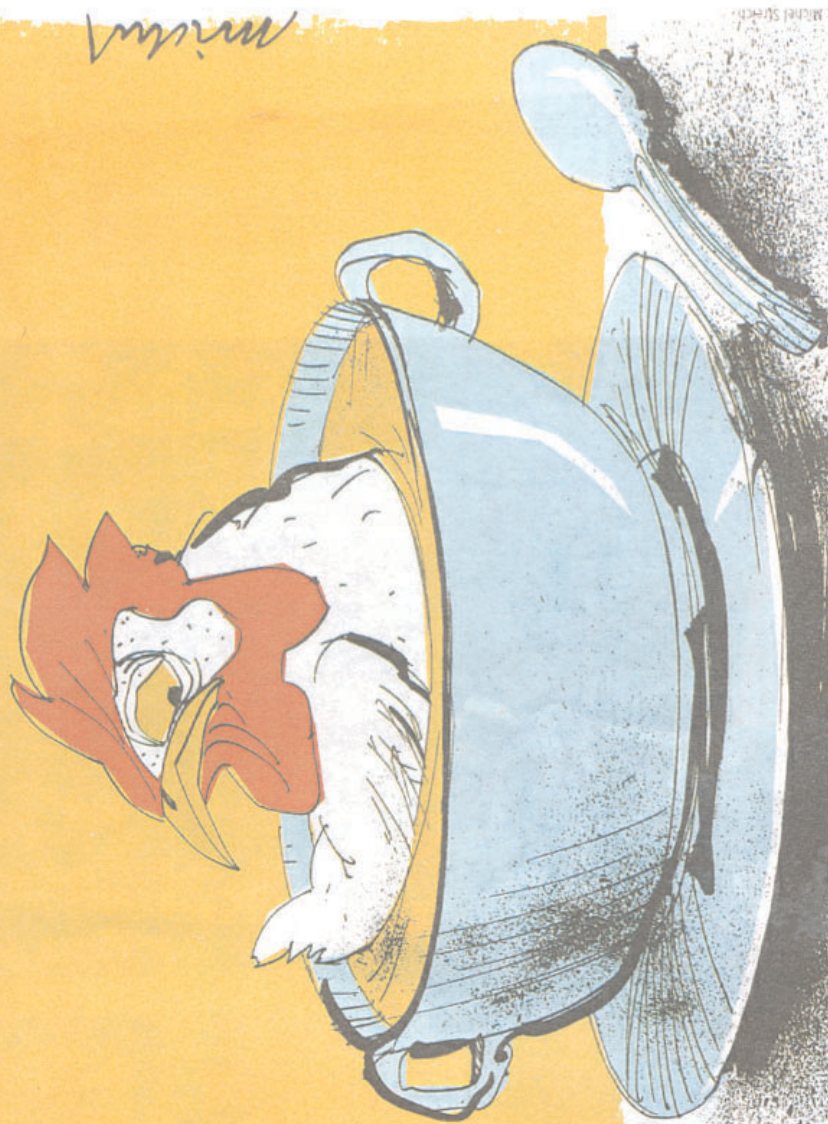
## Lynwood Stores

Here you'll find vegetable, chicken and veal stocks (\$4.50 for 400ml) as well as a veal glaze (a highly reduced stock). We tried the vegetable. It had a sweet, spicy aroma with a firm but light flavour and an interesting spicy top-note on the palate.

123 Norron Street, Leichhardt, 9518 1444; 118 Queen Street, Woollahra, 9362 9177.

## Sam The Butcher

This organic butcher does organic stocks: chicken, veal, beef and vegetable (\$3.90 for 500 mL). We tried the chicken, made from the bones left over from boning Bindharri chickens



*Illustration*

Illustration: Michel Storch

## RECIPES

### Pea soup

This simple and simply delicious soup was served to me at the Restaurante Martnez in Ordizia, Spain, by Rafael Martnez, the son of the original owner and chef. Be warned, it's rich - small bowls only.  
Cook 350g (peeled weight) of the best baby peas you can find in 1L of good chicken or veal stock. Remove the peas and push them through a sieve (blending will puree them too much). Return them to the stock and bring back to just below a simmer. Str through 300g (yes, that much) unsalted butter and add salt to taste. Serves six.

Campbell-branded chicken consomme which has less flavour and fewer ingredients than the Swanson.  
285 Penshurst Street, Willoughby, 9417 2588; Shop 10-14, Amy Street, Camusie, 9718 8699; Thomas Street, Utimo, 9281 2777.

## Hummerston's Gourmet Meats

Bowles fresh chicken stock (750ml for \$11.90) is sold here. It's jellied, a light golden colour, with a wonderful chicken aroma and a deep chicken flavour - you could drink it as a broth - which improves with the addition of salt.  
225 Burns Bay Road, Lane Cove West, 9427 1983.

from Byron Bay. It's clean, clear, sweet, unsalted, with good chicken flavour.  
371 Rocky Point Road, Sams Souci, 9583 1144.

## Burlington Centre Supermarket

The Swanson Clear Chicken Broth (\$1.99 for 410 mL) is covered with Chinese characters, but closer inspection reveals it's made in the US by the Campbell Soup Company. The list of ingredients includes "flavour enhancers" and "chicken flavour". It's dark ("caramel colour" is the ingredient), fatty and chunky. Throw in some noodles and the kids will love it, or use it as a base. Campbell also makes a