

Package Contents:

- 1 whole spent hen
- 2 packs Mrs Miller wide egg noodles
- 1 mini-wheel brie
- 1 half pint pepper butter
- 1 lb grassfed ground beef
- 1 lb pork sausage links
- 2 lbs green tomatoes
- 1 stalk brussel sprouts
- 1 lb organic granola
- 1 lb fresh pasta

“Stewing Chickens”

Every Amish family I know has their own laying hens for fresh eggs. When these hens no longer lay eggs, they are known as stewing chickens or soup birds or spent hens. I’ve asked several Amish families what they do with their spent hens. Each one of them makes soup or chicken stock to eat fresh or to can.

These chickens make exceptional stock and soup because of their age. As they get older, the bones and meat have more flavor.

I’ve heard numerous versions of how to make the best stock and soup. I’ll try to repeat the most popular ones here:

Using a Pressure Cooker

In a pressure cooker, add about 3-4 cups of water. Place your chicken and some vegetables in the stock pot. Good vegetables are onions, shallots, carrots, and celery. Close the lid and bring the pressure cooker up to pressure. Once it reaches pressure, let it cook for approximately 20-25 minutes. Turn off the heat and allow the pressure to subdue.

When you open the pot, you should have essentially a steamed chicken and a very condensed broth beneath it. This condensed stock can be frozen in ice cube trays or canned (using a pressure canner).

The families I have spoken to say that they bring the stock out when they need it and dilute it with water. This can be used in any recipe that needs chicken stock or as the base to a good soup.

Using a Stock Pot

In a large stockpot, bring enough water to boil that it will cover the entire chicken. As the water is heating, cut up your vegetables. Good vegetables are carrots, onions, shallots, celery, and even chard. These will add flavor to the stock.

Salt the water and place the whole chicken in the boiling water. Cook the chicken at a simmer/soft boil until it is very tender. Essentially, you want to cook it until it falls

apart when you try to remove it. This will be a few hours or more.

Remove the chicken from the pot. Let it cool to the touch and remove the meat from the bones. Cut or shred the meat into the sizes you want in your soup.

With the stock, you have two options. Some folks like to pour the stock through a strainer to remove the vegetables. They then add fresh vegetables and cook them to the desired tenderness.

The other option is to just keep the vegetables you have in there and add the chicken back to it. If this is your option, you may want to consider adding some chunks of potato earlier on. This will make it a more filling soup.



Soup Day...experimenting

Finally, add the meat back to the stock. Season to flavor and serve over a bowl of cooked Mrs Miller’s Noodles.

Christmas Ham

Your ham (if you ordered one) is already cooked. It has been smoked over hickory wood chips and basted with a brown sugar glaze. All you need to do is reheat your ham to an internal temperature of 150 to 160 degrees.

Depending on what cut you have, carving it will be slightly different. The shank portion is the one that is pointed at one end. This is the type of ham that is often “spiral cut” because it only has one, straight bone. This ham will be pretty easy to carve.

The rump section has two bones. They join at a large angle, maybe 140 degrees or so (L ish shaped). This can be tricky for carving. Try tracing the bone with the tip of your knife and cutting large chunks off of the bone. They are easier to carve this way.

When you have carved your ham, be sure to save all the scraps and bones. Not only will your dog love a good

ham bone....but so will your stock pot. Add the ham bones to a stock pot, cover with water, and load the water up with potatoes, carrots, etc. Salt the water and bring it to a boil. Reduce the heat to a soft boil or simmer.

About an hour in, add onion. I like to add mine in large chunks. At this point, add some ham scraps you may have accumulated when carving the ham.

Cook the bone until the remaining meat falls from the bones. Pull the bones out and season to taste.

At this point, it is ready to serve. Some cooks like to cool it and scrape the fat off. I personally leave it for two reasons. One, it is flavor. Two, it helps preserve the soup. When you put it back in the fridge the fat will form a layer sealing off the soup below. This soup will keep for about 10 days after cooking.

Roasted Brussel Sprouts with Bacon

This is a recipe I borrowed from the Grovewood Tavern. They currently are running this on their happy hour menu in a rather generous serving size for only \$5.

Roast the brussel sprouts in the oven until tender. In a separate pan, cook some bacon pieces. Use approximately a strip for every 15 or 20 sprouts.

Add the roasted sprouts to the bacon (drain off some of the bacon grease). Splash some cream on the sprouts and cook until the cream thickens and/or is absorbed into the sprouts. Serve immediately.

Green Tomatoes and Pepper Butter

This week I was really excited to get some green tomatoes. While they aren’t nearly as exciting as red tomatoes, I still feel quite lucky to have them for December.

Try fried green tomatoes on your Christmas ham. You may also want to try them on a sandwich with some of the pepper butter.

The pepper butter is a homemade product coming from Maize Valley Farm in Hartsville. The product is made from prepared yellow mustard and emulsified hot peppers. I’ve tried several pepper butters and this one really blew me away. I’ve been eating it on everything from crackers to cheese.