

VEGETABLE STOCK PASTE

- *Prep | 20 m*
- *Cook | 40 m*
- *Ready in | 60m*
- *Makes | 1 large Jar (approx 1 litre)*

You will need

- Freezer/fridge containers
- A large lidded saucepan
- Hand blender or food processor

Ingredients

- 6 tablespoons good olive oil
- 200g celery, finely chop
- 150g carrots, peeled, topped & tailed, finely chopped
- 150g onions, peeled, finely chopped
- 50g fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 300g courgettes, topped & tailed, finely chopped
- 100g mushrooms, chopped
- 5 sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- 40g tomato puree
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
- 4 dried mushrooms (I use shitakes)
- 60g good salt

Herbs & Umami

- 2 bay leaves
- few sprigs fresh sage leaves
- few sprigs fresh rosemary leaves
- few sprigs fresh thyme leaves
- few sprigs fresh basil leaves
- 15g parsley, leaves and stems (or use frozen stems)
- 50g (two generous tablespoons) brown miso paste

Method

01 Heat the oil in a large pot on a high heat, add all your ingredients including the chopped veggies, herbs, tomato paste, miso, dried mushrooms and salt and stir. We want to hear a sizzle when the veggies are added.

02 Cover and turn down the heat to medium. Cook for 40 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until the veggies are very soft and falling apart.

PS: we don't want the mixture to be dry or sticking to the bottom, when lifting the lid to stir the veggies, let the water created by the steam drip down onto the veggies and add a little oil.

03 Once the veggies are super soft and cooled a little, whizz well with a hand blender until the mixture forms a 'scoopable' paste, this will take a few minutes. If the mixture is not blending properly, you could add a few tablespoons of water.

When using a food processor you might need to blend this in batches.

04 Add the mixture to the containers and store in the fridge or freezer. Storing in smaller jars rather than large jars works best.

Serving suggestion

1 tablespoon paste = 250ml water

A fantastic base for risottos, sauces and soups. Also a great alternative to salt when seasoning, soups and sauces.

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Chef's Notes

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Sterilising Jars

I prefer to wash the jars & lids with hot soapy water by hand, thoroughly rinse them, then place them in a low-temp oven 120°C for 20 minutes. I switch the oven off and leave them in the oven till I am ready to fill them.

Always use clean utensils while filling (and eating) the contents and don't touch the inside of the jars or lids with your hands.

The Freezer is your Friend

Keep all but one jar in the freezer. The jar defrosts very quickly (because of the salt) so super handy to have in the freezer.

Adding Flavour - 'Umami'

Umami means "essence of deliciousness" in Japanese, and its taste is often described as the meaty, savory deliciousness that deepens flavor.

We are adding umami rich mushrooms (dried & fresh) and miso to our paste to add extra flavour & 'oomph'.

Vegetarian: You could add 1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan for an Italian twist. Once cooked stir through the veggies.

Adaptable Approach

No recipe is set in stone. When cooking this recipe again you can add any veggies that are in season or use what you have. You can also add 1 can of tomatoes (instead of fresh. I would not add too many root vegetables though, as they can make the mixture quite sweet and 'heavy'.

Salt

The salt acts as a preservative and flavourant. A good salt is vital to a good paste! To mix, add one tablespoon of paste to 250/300ml of water. This is just a guide. Depending on your taste you can adjust the water or paste according to your liking. For example: for a stronger tasting stock add 2 tablespoons of paste or for a weaker stock add more water.