

[Brandywine Table]

Taking Stock

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WELLNESS
THROUGH NOURISHING FOODS
AND WARMING SOUPS

Alyssa Thayer

IT'S ONLY FEBRUARY, BUT ACCORDING TO *US NEWS AND World Report*, about 80% of us have already given up on our New Year's resolutions. A large percentage of those abandoned aspirations fall into the health and wellness category, which got us thinking—how do we create lifestyle changes that are sustainable and lasting?

According to **Annmarie Cantrell**, a healing foods chef and educator and founder of **Cucina Verde**, the key is to adopt holistic guiding principles rather than an extreme new diet. "I actually hate the word diet," she admits.

Around 25 years ago, Annmarie learned about the power of nutrition personally. She was working as an early childhood and special education teacher when she began to feel chronically ill. After seeing doctor after doctor to no avail and taking countless rounds of antibiotics, she was fed up and looking for answers. It was an integrative health practitioner who finally cracked the case, helping her pinpoint and eliminate foods that had been making her sick for so long.



Preparing for a wellness fair at Ursinus College

As she started to feel better, she became hungry (pun intended) for more information and began taking classes and researching how food affects the mind and body. Eventually, she enrolled in the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts, where she learned about ancient food philosophies, including the Chinese Five



Annmarie in the kitchen

Elements Theory and the Indian Ayurvedic System, and how to prepare healing meals.

In 2009 she left her teaching job to pursue her cooking and food education full time. Since then, she's worked with individuals and families and more recently has begun teaching nutrition and cooking classes.



Fermentation samples

Annmarie also runs a fermented foods business, selling sauerkrauts at local farmers' markets. "It's a great opportunity to talk to people about gut health," she says, noting that lacto-fermented foods help rebalance the digestion system and boost immune systems. Even as she touts the benefits of sauerkraut, she acknowledges it isn't for everyone.

Above all else, Annmarie urges folks to eat intuitively and listen to their bodies—nutritional needs can differ from one person to another and are always changing. Our bodies' needs vary depending on many factors including where we are in our lives and the season of the year.

Winter, Annmarie says, is a time to slow down and turn inward. She recommends meditating, taking a soaking bath and enjoying warm soups and broths. It's with that in mind that she curated the recipes in this month's column to help us nourish ourselves from the inside out.



Chicken Broth

Grandmas since the dawn of cooking have known the power of a bowl of homemade chicken soup. This savory broth is delicious on its own, or as the base for almost any soup recipe.

- 3-4 chicken carcasses, leftover from roasted chicken, or 2-3 chicken backs (available from farmers)
- 4 qts. cold water
- 1 large onion quartered (skin on, optional)
- 2-3 carrots, peeled and cut into large chunks
- 2 celery stalks, including leaves
- 2-3 garlic cloves (peeled or unpeeled)

Place water and chicken bones in a large stockpot. Place over medium flame and bring up to heat gently. Avoid boiling the stock.

Spoon away any scum that rises to the top before adding in vegetables. Return to a simmer and cook for 3 to 6 hours. Add more water as needed to keep the bones covered.

Remove the bones. Strain the broth and let cool.
Store in the refrigerator for up to 7 days or freeze.
Makes 4 quarts of stock.

Fish Broth

When we think stock, we don't always think of seafood, but that stock has a beautiful light flavor. Use mild white fish, as oily fish (such as salmon) can become rancid during cooking. Great options include sole, turbot and snapper. TIP - Talk to your fishmonger. They'll often give you the bones from their fillets for free.



Hot and Sour Soup

This is a hearty, flavor-packed soup made with an Asian-style broth, vegetables and rice noodles. It's thickened with arrowroot rather than cornstarch, as arrowroot tends to be easier to digest.

- 4 C. broth
- ½ lb. shitake mushrooms, sliced
- 1 daikon (long white Japanese radish), cut into matchsticks
- 1 carrot, cut into matchsticks

Where do we start?

So you're on board and ready to start your holistic transformation ... now what? Annmarie suggests starting in the pantry.

- **Oust Rancid Oils** – Don't let the name 'vegetable' oil fool you. These highly processed oils (including canola and soybean oil) are anything but healthy. They're often hiding in processed foods and store-bought salad dressings. Replace them with olive oil, coconut oil, ghee and butter. Yup, that's right. That's a green light for butter with bonus points for organic and grass-fed! "Fat isn't the enemy," she explains. "We need it to help satiate us."
- **Purge the Processed** – Ultra-processed foods tend to have unhealthy additives, preservatives and GMO ingredients (Genetically Modified Organisms) in them, which wreak havoc on our bodies. A good rule of thumb—if you can't pronounce the ingredient, it's probably not good for you.
- **Opt for Organic** – Fresh is better than processed, but that isn't the end of the road. Look for organic dairy and meat products to eliminate unwanted toxins. Even better, local and pasture-raised products are the top rungs on the nutritional ladder.
- **Select Sweets Wisely** – You don't have to say goodbye to all desserts—balance and quality are the keys. It's fine to add a little sweetener to your recipes now and then, but some are better than others. Annmarie recommends less processed options such as raw honey, maple syrup or coconut sugar.

- 2 T. butter
 - 2 onions, roughly chopped
 - 1 carrot
 - ½ C. white wine
 - 1 whole carcass of fish, gills removed and washed thoroughly
 - 4 qts. cold water
 - 1 bunch parsley with stems
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 3 sprigs thyme
- Melt butter in a large stockpot. Add onion, carrot and cook until softened (about 30 minutes). Add wine and boil. Add fish carcass and enough cold water to cover.

Bring to a slow simmer and skim off any scum that rises to the top. Add parsley, bay leaf and thyme.

Turn heat to low. Cook for about 1 hour, skimming as needed.

Remove the bones. Strain the stock. Cool and store.

Makes 4 quarts of stock.

Note: This broth is tastiest when fresh, but it can be made ahead. Simply transfer to an airtight container and freeze.

1 C. Napa or green cabbage, thinly sliced
1 Tb. apple cider vinegar
1 Tb. soy sauce or tamari
2 Tb. hot pepper sauce or 1 tsp. red pepper flakes
adjusted to preferred spice level
2 tsp. arrowroot dissolved in 4 tsp. cold water
1 egg, beaten
1 scallion, chopped
2 tsp. freshly grated ginger juice*
Sea salt to taste
Rice noodles, pre-cooked according to package

Heat broth and bring to a low simmer. Add vegetables and cook until they are tender, about 10 minutes. Add vinegar, soy sauce and hot pepper.

Taste and adjust seasoning. Stir in arrowroot slurry and cook on low until broth thickens.

Add beaten egg and stir quickly to combine. Stir in ginger juice. Place rice noodles in bowls. Add soup over top to the bowl and garnish with scallion.

Serves 4 cups or 2 bowls of soup.

**Note: To make ginger root juice, simply grate a 1-inch piece of fresh ginger on a microplane or small side of a grater. Squeeze the pulp over a bowl to release the ginger juice. If this is too messy, place the shredded ginger in a piece of cheesecloth before squeezing.*

White Bean Sausage and Broccoli Rabe Soup

This delicious recipe hails from Northern Italy and is a perfect way to use leftover sausage. Choose your favorite white beans to bring to the party, like canellini, northern, or Navy. Pair with a crusty bread.



3 Tb. butter or olive oil
½ lb. sausage, pork, chicken or turkey
3 cloves garlic, minced

Broth Basics

Broths have been around since the time of our early ancestors when throwing away any part of an animal or harvest was unimaginable. As it turns out, not only are broths a great way to use food scraps, they’re also extremely nutrient-dense and easily digested. Because nutrients in broth are so easily absorbed, they’re perfect for someone coming off an illness, whose body needs to put energy into repairing and healing, rather than breaking down food. Annmarie prepares both vegetarian and bone broths in her classes, adding mushrooms and fortifying herbs to make them delicious and healing.

BONE BROTH TIPS:

- **Quality is king** – Try to use bones from grass-fed, pastured, organic animals. Seek out the cartilaginous bones—feet, knuckles, wings—for the highest nutritional value.
- **Know your local farmer** – Your local animal farmer (or butcher) may be able to give you a deal on bulk products.
- **Build your ‘stock’ pile** – Begin to freeze bones after making a chicken or turkey, and save them for making stock.

VEGETABLE BROTH TIPS:

- **Forage for flavor** – Onion, carrot, celery are classic, but try garlic, leek, shallot, pepper, parsnip, celery root and greens.
- **Cruciferous caution** – Vegetables like broccoli and cabbage can leave a strong and somewhat bitter taste. Instead of using for broth, add these hearty veggies at the end, as part of a composed soup. See broccoli rabe recipe.
- **Spice it up** – Fresh, as well as dried bay leaves, parsley, thyme and peppercorns are all great flavor boosters
- **Immune enhancers** – Give yourself a boost with the help of astragalus root, ginger, turmeric root, dried shiitake mushroom, garlic, nettle, elderberry and seaweeds (such as kombu and dulse, which also add a delicious umami note).
- **Save the scraps** – Just as for bone broth, veggie kitchen scraps should be saved in your fridge or freezer for use later in broth. Save stems, tops, peels—it’s all good.

1 head broccoli rabe*
Crushed red pepper to taste (optional)
2 C. cooked white beans
3–4 C. chicken stock
Sea salt to taste
Parmesan cheese for serving

Heat butter or olive oil in soup pot. Use enough to just coat the bottom of the pan. Add sausage links and brown on each side.

While sausage is cooking, wash broccoli rabe well and chop.

Heat remaining olive oil in a saute pan and add garlic. Let cook about 30 seconds. Add chopped broccoli rabe and coat with oil.

Add crushed red pepper flakes and let broccoli rabe cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add a bit of water if broccoli rabe begins to get too dry or is burning. Set aside.

When sausage is cooked, remove from pan and let cool a bit. Slice sausage and place in soup pot.

Add cooked broccoli rabe and cooked white beans. Cover with chicken stock.

Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer for about 15 minutes. Season with sea salt. Serve warm with Parmesan cheese.
Makes 4 cups or 2 bowls of soup.

**Note: No broccoli rabe, no problem. You can substitute regular broccoli florets or even kale as the vegetable element to this dish.*

Coconut Fish Curry

This 30-minute meal is extremely nourishing and satisfying. Perfect for a chilly winter night.

2 shallots, minced
5 cloves garlic, minced
½ inch knob fresh ginger, grated
1 chili pepper, thinly sliced
1 lb. white fish (cod, haddock)
1 Tb. butter, ghee or coconut oil
1 tsp. mustard seeds or ground mustard
1 Tb. chili powder
1 tsp. turmeric
1 C. stock (either chicken or fish)
1, 13.5-oz can coconut milk
3 chopped tomatoes
Sea salt to taste

Juice of 1 lime
Fresh cilantro, chopped

Cut fish into chunks and set aside.

Heat butter in a large pan. Add shallot, garlic, ginger and chili and cook on medium-high heat until softened.

Add mustard seed or powder, chili powder and turmeric. Stir in stock and coconut milk. Once combined, add in the fish and tomatoes.

Bring to a boil. Simmer for 20 minutes. Season with sea salt. Serve with lime juice and chopped cilantro.

Makes 4 cups or 2 bowls of soup. ♦



Alyssa Thayer found her love of food at an early age, frolicking around her mother’s organic farm and eating her weight in berries and snap peas each summer. She is a self-proclaimed urban farm girl, whose mission is to bring inspired ideas to life, passionate people together, and good food to every table.

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