

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Making stock and pruning roses



A platter of bits and pieces of vegetables and herbs to make stock.



Pink roses

Photos Cynthia Brian

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I am an apostle for “no waste” meal preparations. Except for any woody stems that go to the compost pile, all parts of produce are used in culinary creations. With peelings, tops and scraps, I make a rich, nutritious, and tasty vegetable stock. There is no set recipe as the bits and pieces are always changing, apart from the allium family (garlic and onions), which are critical to every batch. The finished stock becomes a base for soups, sauces, stews, and spaghetti.

Before you begin to experiment with making your homemade stock, be aware that leaves of potatoes, tomatoes and rhubarb are poisonous, especially if ingested in large quantities. Do not use them in your preparations. Toss them in the compost pile.

Making Stock:

Sauté onions, garlic, leeks, or shallots in olive oil. Chop up any fresh or wilted vegetables you have, including leafy tops and green stems. The ends of carrots, turnips, parsnips, pieces of peppers, peppercorns, and any vegetable you have on hand will do. Place the vegetables in a large pot filled with boiling water. Add whatever herbs you wish along with the sautéed onion and garlic mixture. If you want a meat broth, add meat or bones. Simmer until the mixture reduces – the longer, the better. Add wine for extra flavor. Season to taste if desired and strain when completed. Use your stock immediately or freeze the extra. Stock can be made in a slow cooker

if you don’t have time to watch the stove, or it can be made in a pot in the oven with a temperature set at 250 F. Once you start making homemade stock, you won’t want to buy boxed or canned stock again. Making stock is a fantastic way to use up veggies in your refrigerator that may be past their prime, but still good. Mushrooms, celery, fennel, and ginger always offer an extra zing. It’s fun to experiment with your creativity. Stock up!

Pruning Roses:

Although my numerous rose bushes continued to be prolific bloomers throughout the holiday season, the nine atmospheric rivers and the frigid nights contributed to the demise of new buds. As a Northern California gardener, I have always performed a heavy pruning of my roses in late January or early February. I always detest having to prune flowering plants, procrastinating as long as possible. Because of the storms, this February is the opportune month to heavily prune your roses before the new growth begins, allowing you to shape the bushes while the plant is dormant and prevent the spreading of any disease.

Before you begin pruning, cut any buds or blooms for a final flush of flowers for an indoor bouquet. If you are growing Chinese Fringe flowers, add sprigs of it to your arrangement for a pop of cotton candy pink or a few stems of early blooming daffodils for a sunny smile. When pruning, wear gloves and always use sharp, clean tools to make clean cuts: secateurs, loppers, and saws. Sterilize often between bushes.

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