

A close-up photograph of a white bowl filled with a light-colored chicken broth. The broth is topped with thin, yellow noodles, sliced white onions, and small pieces of green and red vegetables. The lighting is bright, highlighting the textures of the ingredients.

Week 2 - Gut Healing Chicken Broth

Inflammation and compromised gut health can impact fertility dramatically. Thankfully, we can use food to repair damage that may have been done due to food intolerances, stress, medications or unhealthy food choices.

It's important to understand that inflammation is a perfectly natural protective mechanism that the human body uses to respond to infections or injury. Acute inflammation, that ebbs and flows as needed tells us that we have a well balanced immune system. Symptoms of inflammation that are "always-on" and don't recede tell us that the "on switch" is stuck and we are poised on high alert - even when we aren't in danger. This is when inflammation can cause a problem, to every organ and body function, including fertility.

Chicken broth (or any bone broth) that is cooked slowly, for several hours is one of the most nourishing foods available to us. A South American proverb claims that "good broth will resurrect the dead" and while that may not be entirely true, it can certainly help to bring a damaged gut back to life.

Really good meat stock is rich in fat soluble vitamins like A, D & K. The words 'fat soluble' here are key - if you eat a low fat diet, there is insufficient fat available to hold or store those vitamins. In fact, traditional diets always included some form of animal fat. Perhaps our ancestors knew more than we did about the need for these vital nutrients? "Sacred foods", high in these fat soluble nutrients were saved for newly weds before they conceived their children, to ensure the best possible start in life. Food for thought?

You will need:

2 or 3 raw chicken carcasses or a whole raw bird (ask your butcher if you can get carcasses!)

The largest saucepan you can find, with a lid that fits.

Filtered water (or unfluoridated tap water)

1 tbsp raw apple cider vinegar

1/2 tsp of unrefined sea salt or pink Himalayan salt

2 carrots

6 black peppercorns

Making the broth with raw carcasses yields a more nutritious broth, but you can also use the carcass of an already roasted bird. If you decide to do this, save up a few carcasses in the freezer before making the broth.

How to:

Put the carcasses of whole chicken into your largest saucepan. (If you're using a whole raw bird, check that giblets/liver have been removed)

Cover with filtered water. Add the salt and apple cider vinegar, put the lid on and leave to sit for half an hour or so. This begins to break down the cartilage and bone structure to get as much out of the carcass as possible.

Add carrots & peppercorns. Bring the water to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Skim off any grey scum that comes to the surface. With an organic bird I find there's very little of this.

If using a whole bird, after 2 hours carefully remove the bird from the saucepan.

Allow to cool, strip off all the meat and return the carcass to the saucepan. Removing the meat at this stage will ensure it is fully cooked and still juicy, but there is still lots of nourishment left in the carcass.

With the carcass back in the water, cover and continue to simmer for 4-8 hours (or as long as you can stay in the house to keep an eye on it)

Turn the heat off and allow the broth to cool completely.

Once cooled, remove the carcass and vegetables and divide the broth up for storage into glass jars.

How to Use it:

Chicken broth like this can be drunk straight out of a cup, as a nourishing, soothing hot drink. It can also be used instead of bouillon in any soup recipe and is a far more nourishing alternative. It can be added to powdered miso soup (see the snacks recipes) instead of hot water for added nourishment and gut healing powers.

Why the glass storage jars?

I try to avoid using plastic bags or containers. Plastic containers are one of the many sources of xenoestrogens – chemicals that mimic the behaviour of oestrogen in the body. If you are working on balancing hormones and optimising your fertility, minimising those plastics is one easy step in the process. Sometimes, plastic bags are all that's available, but begin to build your collection of glass storage now and always choose glass first.

We cannot separate our reproductive health from that of our gut. If one system is out of whack, it can have a domino effect on every other system in the body. The mechanism, or root of the problem may be different for everyone, but damage to the gut is almost always a safe place to start.