

Matzo Ball Soup Broth

Serves 6-8

This recipe is really a two-part situation: The Broth, and The Balls. You can make one without the other (it's a great all-purpose chicken broth, and the matzo balls can definitely be added to any frozen or store-bought broth you trust), but they are designed to be together. It took me a long time to accept that I actually prefer my Matzo Ball Soup without actual pieces of chicken, which this version reflects. To me, this soup is really about the soft, fluffy matzo balls and the deep, lightly sweet chicken-yness of the broth, made from wings, necks, backs, legs, or, a whole chicken if you like (pick the meat and add to the soup if you must, or save for something else), lots of onion (skin-on), so much celery, and just a suggestion of carrot.

For The Broth

4 – 5 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken (this can be wings, parts, or a whole chicken cut up)

2 large yellow onions, unpeeled, quartered

2 garlic heads, unpeeled, halved crosswise

6 celery stalks, chopped

1–2 carrots or 1 large fennel bulb, unpeeled, chopped

A small handful of black peppercorns

1–2 fresh or dried bay leaves, optional

Kosher salt

Make The Broth

- 1 Place chicken, onions, garlic, celery, carrots, peppercorns and bay leaves, if using, in a large pot and cover with 10–12 cups water (basically you want to fill your pot to the top with water, this should take 10–12 cups.)
- 2 Season with a good amount of salt and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low (the broth should be gently simmering) and continue to simmer until the chicken is cooked through and falling apart, the vegetables are nearly mush (but still taste good) and the broth is as seasoned and delicious as you'd want it to be when serving, another hour and a half or so. If you want to pluck the legs/thighs out and pick the meat from them for later use, you should (I do!).
- 3 Strain the broth (I use a basic strainer, no need for cheesecloth). Keep it warm if using the same day, or let it cool before refrigerating overnight (you should have 8–10 cups of broth).

PSA: *This is my basic and very general recipe for chicken broth across the board. It's ripe for innovation, modifications and adjustments based on its final destination. I will say for matzo ball soup, I find the muted sweetness and heavy celery-ness of this particular version is *chefs kiss* and I personally, would not change a thing.*

Matzo Ball Soup Assembly

For The Matzo Balls

1 cup matzo meal (not matzo ball mix), or 1 cup finely ground matzo boards (from 3–4 matzo boards)

1/4 cup finely chopped chives, plus more for garnish

1/4 cup finely chopped dill, plus more for garnish

1 3/4 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more

5 large eggs

1/3 cup chicken fat or unsalted butter (if not keeping Kosher), melted

1/4 cup club soda or seltzer

2 celery stalks, thinly sliced, plus any leaves

1 small carrot, unpeeled and thinly sliced, optional

Freshly ground black pepper

Make The Matzo Balls

- 1 Combine matzo meal, 1/4 cup chives, 1/4 cup dill and 1 3/4 teaspoons kosher salt in a medium bowl. Using a fork, incorporate eggs until well blended. Add chicken fat, followed by club soda, mixing until everything is evenly soaked in chicken fat/seltzer.

PSA: *This mixture will look LOOSE! Like, upsettingly and impossibly loose. It will firm up as it sits and hydrates. Trust me, trust the matzo ball.*

- 2 Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until mixture is firm and fully hydrated, at least 2 hours (and up to 24 hours). It should have the texture of wet clay. Malleable yet shapeable.
- 3 Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Using your hands, roll matzo ball mixture into balls, somewhere between the size of a ping pong and golf ball (if you prefer more, smaller balls, go ping pong– if you want fewer, larger balls, go golf), placing them on a plate or parchment-lined baking sheet until all the mixture is rolled (you should have about 12–24 matzo balls, depending on if you went smaller or larger).
- 4 If the mixture starts to feel too soft, you can always put the mixture back into the fridge to firm up. I have also been known to skip the “roll on a sheet pan” step and just roll directly into the pot of boiling water. They always somehow end up perfectly spherical.

PSA: *Please resist the urge to make the matzo balls larger—they double in size and will be perfect once cooked, this I promise you.*

- 5 *Gently plop all of the matzo balls into the boiling water and cook until floating, puffed, and cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes. (Pluck one from the water at 12 minutes and cut it in half to see how it's doing—the texture should be uniform in color and texture, lighter in color than the raw state. It should look fluffy, not dense.) Using a slotted spoon, transfer the matzo balls to the chicken broth to finish cooking.*
- 6 *Add celery and carrots, if using, and season again with salt before ladling it into bowls. Top with #lotsofdill, chives, celery leaves if you've got them and a crack of freshly ground pepper. A squeeze of lemon is certainly not traditional, but I will say it is good.*