BACK TO BASICS

How many times have you seen a recipe that calls for cooking stock, which you would love to make if only you had the time? How many times have you reached for a store-bought stock that’s loaded with salt, MSG, and who knows what all else?

Too many, we’re guessing. But those days are over. Kitchen Basics Unsalted Chicken Stock relies on the same ingredients you’d use to make homemade stock, and it has no added salt, and it’s the best-tasting unsalted cooking stock out there. (Insert applause.)

The stock—the company also makes Vegetable and Beef versions—is a real find. Its ingredients: chicken stock, chicken flavor, vegetable stocks (carrot, onion, mushroom, celery), honey, bay, thyme, and pepper. There’s so much chicken that each cup has 5 grams of protein.

It’s not sodium free, because some of its ingredients (like celery and chicken stock) have naturally occurring sodium. But at 150 milligrams per cup (200 mg for the Beef and 240 mg for the Vegetable), it has a fraction of the usual. Progresso Chicken Broth, for example, has 850 mg of sodium (not to mention chicken powder, chicken fat, autolyzed yeast extract, and other ingredients to pump up the flavor).

Instead, Kitchen Basics slowly simmers its ingredients so they cook down to a rich intensity that will brighten up your soups, stews, grains, and other dishes. And it comes in a handy 32 oz. flip-top carton (you can freeze what you don’t use) or an 8.25 oz. mini-carton.

Finally. A stock worth investing in.

Kitchen Basics: (800) 632-5847

FROSTING FUN!

“Grab a starter. Select a flavor. Get inspired.” That’s how Duncan Hines entices shoppers to try its new Frosting Creations.

The company must have been searching for an exciting new way to sell its frosting. After all, another tub of sugar, partially hydrogenated soybean and cottonseed oils, corn syrup, corn starch, and artificial flavor and color is kind of a snore.

Well, snore no more. You can light a fire under your frosting experience by dumping the contents of the Flavor Mix packet into the Frosting Starter tub. Choose from more than a dozen flavors, like Strawberry Shortcake, Bubble Gum, or Cotton Candy. Each has 10 calories from sugar plus natural and artificial flavors and food dyes like Red 40, Yellow 5, and Blue 2. Some food dyes can make ADHD worse in some children and may slightly increase the risk of cancer. How exhilarating!

Then you get to stir the flavor into the starter frosting yourself. How inspiring to watch a tub of sugar and partially hydrogenated oil (dyed white) turn cotton-candy blue.

Each two-tablespoon serving of Frosting Creations adds 130 calories and four teaspoons of sugar to the calories (from sugar, fat, and white flour) that are already in your cake.

Bonus: because Duncan is still using partially hydrogenated oil, you get—in addition to the two grams of saturated fat in each serving—two grams of trans fat (a day’s worth).

“So moist. So delicious. And so much more.” That’s Duncan’s motto.

So much more indeed.

Duncan Hines: (800) 362-9834

Photos: Paige Einstein/CSPI (left), Jorge Bach/CSPI (right).

Simple-As-Can-Be Broccoli

Steam 1 lb. of broccoli florets until tender-crisp, 2-3 minutes. Mix 2 tsp. of reduced-sodium soy sauce with 1 tsp. of balsamic vinegar, 1 tsp. of toasted sesame oil, and ¼ tsp. of brown sugar. Drizzle over the hot broccoli and sprinkle with 2 Tbs. of chopped peanuts. The dressing also goes great on steamed asparagus, snow peas, or bok choy.

Dish of the Month

Photo: Paige Einstein/CSPI (left), Jorge Bach/CSPI (right).