



FRENCH · BRASSERIE · FIRST COURSE

# Beef Consommé with Braised Oxtail & Brunoise

A crystal-clear consommé enriched with fall-apart oxtail and a confetti of root vegetables — classical French technique made approachable.

Protein Beef / Oxtail

Serves 6 – 8

Difficulty Advanced

Active 2 h 30 min

Total 12 – 14 h (includes overnight chill)

## THE STORY

### The Clearest Broth You'll Ever Make

Consommé is the final exam of French stockcraft. A perfectly clarified broth — amber, transparent, intensely flavored — proves you understand protein coagulation, gentle heat management, and patience. Most recipes make it sound impossible. It isn't. The egg-white raft does the hard work; you just need to not boil it.

This version pairs the classic consommé with braised oxtail — the same cut that gave the stock its depth now returns as tender, shredded meat in the bowl. A brunoise of carrots, turnips, and celery adds color and bite. It's one of those dishes that looks effortless on the plate but teaches you six techniques in the making.

AT A GLANCE

# Specs

<p>YIELD</p> <p><b>~2 qt clarified</b></p>	<p>PROTEIN</p> <p><b>Beef / Oxtail</b></p>	<p>KEY TEMP</p> <p><b>180 °F</b></p>	<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p><b>Advanced</b></p> <p>●●●●○</p>
<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p><b>2 h 30 min</b></p>	<p>PASSIVE TIME</p> <p><b>10 h (braise + chill)</b></p>	<p>MAKE-AHEAD</p> <p><b>Yes — 3 days</b></p>	<p>CUISINE</p> <p><b>French</b></p>
<p>COURSE</p> <p><b>First Course</b></p>	<p>PAIRS WITH</p> <p><b>Burgundy, Sherry</b></p>		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

## What Changed & Why

The original recipe calls for a traditional consommé technique with a separate braise. The Umami adaptation combines both processes for efficiency and deepens the flavor profile with a few modern touches.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
<b>SUB</b>	Beef shin for stock	Oxtail (dual-purpose: stock + garnish)	One cut does double duty — deeper gelatin extraction
<b>TECH</b>	Stovetop clarification	Low oven clarification at 180 °F	Even heat, no hot spots, zero babysitting
<b>ELEV</b>	Julienned vegetables	Precision brunoise (3 mm dice)	Cleaner bowl presentation, better spoon feel
<b>ADD</b>	—	Sherry vinegar finish (½ tsp/bowl)	Brightens the palate, lifts the fat cap perception

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
<b>TECH</b>	Paper towel straining	Coffee-filter + ladle technique	Crystal clarity with less waste

## INGREDIENTS

# What You Need

### Everyday

#### Stock Base

- 4 lb oxtail, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 2 large onions, quartered (skin on)
- 3 carrots, rough-chopped
- 3 celery stalks, rough-chopped
- 1 head garlic, halved crosswise
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 4 qt cold water
- Kosher salt

#### Clarification Raft

- 4 egg whites + crushed shells
- 8 oz lean ground beef
- 1 carrot, finely grated
- 1 celery stalk, finely grated
- $\frac{1}{2}$  onion, finely grated

#### Brunoise Garnish

- 1 carrot
- 1 small turnip
- 1 celery stalk
- Fresh chervil or parsley

## No Limits

### Upgrades

- 1 oz dried porcini mushrooms (stock phase)
- 2 star anise (stock phase — remove before clarifying)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup dry Madeira or Oloroso sherry (finishing)
- Black truffle, shaved (garnish — 2 g per bowl)
- Bone marrow croutons (see Technique Notes)

### Presentation

- Gold-rimmed consommé cups
- Fleur de sel for finishing
- Chervil sprigs (not parsley)

## EQUIPMENT

### Your Kit

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- Heavy stockpot (8+ qt)
- Fine-mesh strainer
- Cheesecloth or coffee filters
- Ladle
- Instant-read thermometer
- Large bowl (for ice bath)
- Dutch oven (for oxtail braise)
- Mandoline or sharp knife (for brunoise)
- Fat separator or paper towels

## MISE EN PLACE

# Before You Start

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- Oxtail patted dry, seasoned with salt 1 hour ahead
- Onions quartered, skin left on (adds color to stock)
- Carrots, celery rough-chopped for stock
- Tomato paste measured
- Egg whites and shells in a bowl, ground beef mixed in with grated veg
- Brunoise vegetables: cut into precise 3 mm dice, held in ice water
- Madeira or sherry measured (if using No Limits tier)
- Serving bowls warming in low oven

## MAKE-AHEAD

# Timeline

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- Day Before – Morning**  
Brown oxtail and aromatics. Build the stock. Simmer 4–6 hours uncovered.
- Day Before – Evening**  
Strain stock, pull oxtail meat from bones and shred. Refrigerate stock overnight.
- Day Of – 3 Hours Before**  
Lift fat cap from chilled stock. Prepare the clarification raft.
- Day Of – 2 Hours Before**  
Clarify the stock in oven at 180 °F for 90 minutes.
- Day Of – 30 Min Before**  
Strain consommé through coffee filter. Cut brunoise. Warm oxtail in consommé.
- Day Of – Service**  
Ladle consommé into warmed bowls. Add oxtail, brunoise, chervil, and sherry.

## METHOD

# The Cook

### 1 Build the Stock

1. Pat oxtail dry. Season generously with kosher salt. In the stockpot over high heat, sear oxtail on all sides until deeply browned, 3–4 min `{{t:180:Sear}}` per side. Remove and set aside.
2. In the same pot, add onions cut-side down. Cook without moving until charred, 4–5 min `{{t:240:Cook}}`. Add carrots, celery, garlic, and tomato paste. Cook, stirring, 2 min `{{t:120:Cook}}`.
3. Return oxtail to pot. Add 4 qt cold water. Bring to a bare simmer — you want lazy bubbles, not a rolling boil.
4. Simmer uncovered 4–6 hours, skimming foam every 30 min for the first hour. Add water if level drops below the bones.
5. If using No Limits: add dried porcini and star anise at hour 2. Remove star anise at hour 4.



#### WHY THIS WORKS

Starting with cold water extracts collagen more gently than adding bones to boiling water. This produces a clearer, more gelatin-rich stock. Charring the onion skins adds deep amber color — the Maillard reaction on allium sugars creates melanoidins that tint the liquid without cloudiness.

## 2 Strain & Chill

1. Remove oxtail pieces. When cool enough to handle, pull meat from bones and shred into bite-sized pieces. Refrigerate the shredded meat.
2. Strain stock through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean container. Discard solids.
3. Cool the stock in an ice bath, then refrigerate overnight uncovered.
4. The next day: lift the solidified fat cap off the surface in one piece. Discard.



### WHY THIS WORKS

Overnight chilling does two things: it solidifies the fat cap for easy removal (essential for clear consommé) and allows the gelatin to set, which tells you the stock is rich enough. A good stock should jiggle like Jell-O when cold.

## 3 Clarify with the Raft

1. In a bowl, whisk egg whites until slightly frothy. Mix in ground beef, grated carrot, celery, and onion. Add crushed eggshells.
2. Stir the raft mixture into the cold, defatted stock in a clean stockpot.
3. Place in a preheated 180 °F oven, uncovered.
4. After 20–30 min, a solid raft of coagulated protein will form on the surface. Do not stir or disturb.
5. Continue for 60–90 min total. The consommé beneath the raft should be clear amber.



### WHY THIS WORKS

The egg whites and ground beef form a protein matrix (the "raft") that traps suspended particles as the stock heats. Low oven heat — 180 °F — keeps the liquid below a simmer, preventing the raft from breaking apart. This is why oven clarification works better than stovetop: perfectly even heat, no stirring required.



### FOOD SAFETY

The raft contains raw egg and ground beef. Internal temperature of the consommé must reach at least **165 °F** to be safe. An instant-read thermometer inserted through a gap in the raft should confirm this before serving.

## 4 Final Strain & Garnish

1. Gently ladle consommé from under the raft through a coffee filter or double layer of cheesecloth into a clean pot. Do not press or squeeze the raft.
2. Season the consommé with salt. It should taste intensely beefy with no bitterness.
3. Add shredded oxtail to the consommé and warm gently over low heat.
4. Blanch the brunoise vegetables in salted boiling water for 60 seconds `{{t:60:Blanch}}`. Drain and add to bowls.
5. Ladle consommé and oxtail into warmed bowls. Top with brunoise, chervil, and (if using) shaved truffle. Finish each bowl with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp sherry vinegar or a splash of Madeira.

### QUICK REFERENCE

## Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Sear oxtail	1 5 min	Deep brown crust on all sides
Char onions + aromatics	8 min	Black char on cut faces
Simmer stock	4 – 6 h	Lazy bubbles, not rolling boil
Pull oxtail + strain	2 0 min	Meat falls off bone easily
Overnight chill	8 – 1 2 h	Fat cap solidified on top
Mix raft	5 min	Frothy whites + even mix
Oven clarification	6 0 – 9 0 min	Clear amber beneath raft
Final strain	1 5 min	Can read newsprint through liquid
Blanch brunoise	6 0 sec	Tender-crisp, bright color
Plate & serve	5 min	Warmed bowls, garnishes prepped

## TROUBLESHOOTING

# Emergency Protocols

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### CONSOMMÉ IS CLOUDY

Don't panic. Re-clarify with a fresh half-batch of egg whites and ground beef. Bring to 180 °F in the oven again. The most common cause is boiling during clarification — keep the temperature strictly below 185 °F.

### RAFT SANK OR BROKE APART

The stock was too hot when you added the raft mixture. Next time, start with cold stock. For now: strain everything, chill, and re-clarify tomorrow with a fresh raft.

### STOCK WON'T GEL WHEN CHILLED

Not enough collagen extracted. Add 2 split pig's feet or 1 lb chicken feet and simmer an additional 2 hours. Oxtail alone should gel, but old or pre-frozen oxtail may have less collagen.

### CONSOMMÉ TASTES WEAK

Reduce it. Simmer the strained consommé (before clarifying) uncovered until the flavor concentrates. Aim for half the original volume. Then clarify.

## DEEP DIVES

# Technique Notes

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## Clarification Raft

STOCK · CLASSICAL FRENCH

The raft is a protein filter. Egg whites coagulate between 144–158 °F, trapping suspended particles in a mesh of denatured albumin. Adding lean ground beef increases the protein surface area and contributes flavor. The crushed eggshells add calcium, which helps the protein network firm up. Think of it as a biological coffee filter — except this one adds flavor while it cleans.

## Brunoise Knife Work

KNIFE SKILLS · PRECISION CUTS

Brunoise is a 3 mm ( $\frac{1}{8}$  inch) dice — the finest standard cut in classical French technique. Start by cutting vegetables into 3 mm julienne (matchsticks), then cross-cut into perfect cubes. Consistency matters more than speed. Uneven brunoise cooks unevenly and looks amateur in a refined dish. A sharp knife and a stable cutting board are non-negotiable.

## Bone Marrow Croutons (No Limits)

GARNISH · NO LIMITS TIER

Soak marrow bones in salted ice water for 12 hours to purge blood. Roast at 425 °F for 15-18 minutes until the marrow is soft and slightly pulling away from the bone. Scoop onto toasted baguette rounds, season with fleur de sel and cracked black pepper. Float one crouton per bowl — the marrow melts into the consommé as you eat, creating an unctuous richness.

### PAIRING

## What to Drink

### Wine — Everyday

Côtes du Rhône Villages, red (Grenache-dominant)

*The warm spice and soft tannins complement the beef without competing with the delicate consommé.*

### Wine — No Limits

Burgundy Pinot Noir, Gevrey-Chambertin or Nuits-Saint-Georges

*Earth, mushroom, and bright acidity — the classic pairing with consommé since the classical-French canon.*

## Fortified

Dry Oloroso Sherry or Sercial Madeira

*The nutty oxidative character mirrors the depth of a long-simmered stock. A sip between spoonfuls is traditional service.*

### CONTEXT

## Menu Ideas

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### Before the Consommé

No starter needed — the consommé IS the first course. If you must, a single gougère (Gruyère choux puff) with the aperitif.

### Main Course to Follow

Roast beef tenderloin with sauce Bordelaise, pommes Dauphine, and haricots verts. Or go simpler: roast chicken with root vegetables — let the consommé be the showpiece.

### Cheese Course

Comté (24-month), a wedge of Époisses, and walnut bread. The richness follows naturally from the consommé's depth.

### YOUR NOTES

## Cook Log

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### Session Notes

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ · Serves: \_\_\_\_ · Rating: \_\_ / 5

*Use this space to record what you changed, what worked, and what you'd do differently next time. Your future self will thank you.*

