

Hi Gretchen,

To make a "big batch" you need:

- 1-1/2 to 2 loaves of "white bread" (I buy the cheapest store brand)
- 1-1/2 to 2 pounds of pork sausage (I use Jimmy Dean. The packages are 12 oz to 16 oz. I get one regular pork sausage and one reduced fat one usually.)
- 2 mammoth yellow onions or 3 large ones plus one medium yellow onion
- a medium to large bunch of celery
- turkey stock
- salt

One to two days before:

Dry the bread. Lay it out on racks until it's dried through. I crumble it into a (really) big bowl as it dries. It's important to dry the bread so that it can absorb the flavorful turkey stock.

Make the turkey stock. I put about 1-1/2 quarts water into my 4 quart saucepan. Add turkey neck(s) and back(s) and giblets (not the liver), the quartered medium onion, and some celery, usually the top leafy few inches of 6 or 8 celery stalks. Simmer for an hour or two until everything is tender. Let it cool and pick the meat from the necks and backs and shred. Chop the giblets very finely. By this time the celery and onions are so cooked that I don't even chop them further. Just leave them in the broth. They'll get added in to the whole mixture.

If you can't get turkey bony parts to make your own broth (I buy them when I see them and keep them in the freezer) you can use "Better than Bouillion" brand turkey soup base, but it's not as good and it has a lot of salt in it. Maybe there's some kind of canned turkey broth. I never checked.

The day or night before:

In a large Dutch Oven or other oven-proof pot, brown the pork sausage, crumbling it with your spoon as it browns. When it's about half cooked, pour off and discard all but a couple of tablespoons of the fat. Add the onion (medium dice) and cook until it's softened a tiny bit. (If I use one regular pork sausage and one reduced fat I don't usually have to pour much fat off). When the pork sausage is brown but not crisped to dryness, turn off the heat.

Now comes the fun and messy part. Your broth should be warm.

To the pot add about 1/2 of the dried, crumbled bread, 8 to 10 stalks of diced celery, the chopped giblets and shredded turkey and pour in about 1/2 of the broth. Mix with your hands. I generally just use my right hand and squoosh everything together. I keep adding the bread and broth until the broth is gone and it's the "right" consistency. This comes with experience but it's quite sticky. My mom called it "wet dressing." I usually get through about 1-1/2 loaves of the bread before it's right. Add salt to taste during this smooshing process. It's safe to taste along the way, and this is one of my favorite parts. I love "raw" dressing almost more than cooked. Drove my mother crazy.

Cover and refrigerate overnight. Because the bread is so dry, it doesn't instantly take up all the broth. That's why you make it the day before, so that it can absorb more overnight.

Cover with foil and bake at 350 for about 45 minutes to an hour, then uncover and bake about a half hour to hour more. It will brown a little on the top. Zach will know if the consistency is right when it's done. It definitely is solid rather than crumbly.

Call if you need more guidance.

Have a great Thanksgiving! We'll miss you.

Love, Auntie