



Beef Broth with Pearl Barley

(makes 4 servings)

There is something about barley that evokes a warm, cozy feeling! Many countries, like Scotland where I hail from, use this starchy and delicious grain copiously, others barely recognise its existence but barley in a meaty soup is a marriage made in heaven. It is also deliciously nutty in a warm salad as a replacement for rice, pasta or couscous.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon light olive oil
300g lean stewing/chuck steak, cut into bite-sized chunks
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped
3 carrots, peeled and diced
3 stalks celery, finely sliced
1 bay leaf and 1 sprig fresh rosemary
2 litres beef stock
100g pearl barley, rinsed
Large handful fresh parsley leaves, roughly chopped
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

Warm the oil in a soup pot and quickly brown the meat over a high heat, stirring constantly. Add the balsamic vinegar and Worcestershire sauce and keep stirring until most of the liquid has evaporated.

Reduce the heat and add the onion, carrots, celery, bay leaf and rosemary. Put the lid on and allow to gently sauté until the vegetables are tender.

Add three quarters of the stock, bring to the boil, add the barley and parsley, stir well then reduce the heat and simmer for an hour or so until the barley and carrots are tender.

Turn off the heat, remove the bay leaf and rosemary then whizz with a hand blender to slightly thicken but still leave a good chunky texture. Season to taste and if it is too thick add the remainder of the stock and/or boiling water.

This is one of those soups that thickens if left overnight as the barley continues to swell so check the consistency and add water if necessary before serving.