

SAUSAGE BARLEY SOUP

This Sausage Barley Soup is in regular rotation these days. The basic aromatics are sautéed in olive oil, spiked with a bit of garlic, and then the vegetables and joined by dried herbs, bay leaf, tomato paste, crushed plum tomatoes, a Parmesan rind, (preferably homemade) chicken or vegetable stock, and pearl barley. The same soup can be made with puy lentils (also called French lentils) in the place of barley if you're looking for more protein or if you want to make the recipe gluten free. The barley version is a bit more comforting; it has a toasty, warming quality that I love. The lentil version is a bit heartier, more earthy and robust than the barley one. Whichever direction you go with it, I recommend serving this soup with a good crusty French bread or a heaping plate of fragrant garlic bread, and topping the soup itself with a little grated Parmesan, and a drizzle of olive oil.

Ingredients.

- 1 lb (450g) ground sausage
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and diced
- 2-3 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon dried parsley, sage, and thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- pinch of ground nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 14oz can peeled plum tomatoes,
- 1 parmesan rind
- 2 1/2 pints (6 cups) chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 cups pearl barley (or puy lentils)
- extra virgin olive oil
- kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper

Directions.

Season the ground sausage with salt and pepper. Heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a large pot over medium high heat. Brown the sausage in the pot, breaking it up with a wooden spoon, until it's golden brown. Transfer the sausage to a bowl and set it aside.

Add a bit more olive oil if needed before adding in the onions. Sauté the onions until they are translucent, about 5-7 minutes. Add in the carrots and celery and sauté for another few minutes. Toss in the garlic and sauté another few minutes. Add the sausage back into the pot along with dried herbs, the bay leaf, and the pinch of nutmeg, and stir to coat the vegetables and meat with the herbs.

To the pot add the tomato paste, and crush the peeled plum tomatoes by hand into the pot, discarding the cores, as well as any tomato juice in the can. Toss in your Parmesan rind if you have one.

Add the stock to the pot and bring the soup up to a low simmer before adding in either the barley or the lentils. Cook until either the barley or the lentils are tender but retain a bit of bite - this will vary based on the ingredient. I find that the barley takes about 30-40 minutes, and the lentils take about 20-30 minutes to cook perfectly. As the soup simmers, stir it occasionally, and check the doneness of the barley/lentils as you go.

Serve the soup piping hot with a shower of freshly grated Parmesan and a drizzle of olive oil.

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