Vegetable Barley Pot

Four generous grain-and-vegetable bowls, light main-meal portions · Active 20 min · Total 1 hr 25 min

Skills: Allowing a whole grain its full simmer and staging mixed frozen vegetables by their label

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon neutral or olive oil (15 ml)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped (100 g)
- 1 cup pearled barley (180 g), rinsed
- 4 1/4 cups water (1 L), plus up to 1 cup/240 ml if needed
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme (0.5 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt (3 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.5 g)
- 3 cups plain frozen mixed vegetables, such as peas, carrots, sweetcorn and green beans (450 g)
- 1 can cooked green or brown lentils, 15 oz/425 g net, drained and rinsed (240 g drained)

Set out

Heavy saucepan with lid, at least 4 qt/4 L, Strainer, Measuring jug, Spoon or ladle

Allergens

barley. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat oil in the saucepan over medium heat. Cook onion for 6–8 minutes until soft. Stir in rinsed barley, 1 L water, thyme, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil.

2. Cover loosely and simmer gently for 35–45 minutes, or the barley packet time, stirring occasionally. Add extra water in small amounts only if the grain is still firm and the pan is drying.

3. When barley is almost tender, add the frozen vegetables. Bring back to a simmer and cook for at least their package-directed time, usually 8–12 minutes depending on the pieces. The largest vegetables and the barley must both be tender.

4. Fold in drained cooked lentils and simmer for 3–5 minutes until hot. Add any remaining extra water gradually only if needed for a little free broth. Divide all the pot among 4 bowls.

A flexible bag, a defined amount

The mix can vary, but the 450 g prepared total matters. A bag including large raw root chunks may need longer than a small-cut pea-and-carrot mix.

Ingredient labels

Barley contains gluten. Check the actual frozen vegetable and canned lentil packs for sauces or additional ingredients; plain products are intended.

A useful detail

The 85-minute estimate allows onion cooking, bringing the liquid to a boil and a full pearl-barley simmer. A packet requiring longer must have that time; quick barley is not an identical clock.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3 days. Reheat a portion to 165°F/74°C throughout, stirring with a little water to loosen. Freeze promptly cooled portions for up to 2 months and thaw in the refrigerator. Barley continues absorbing liquid, so store bread or other separately prepared accompaniments separately if used.