Creamy Broccoli Barley Hotdish

One 8×12 in (20×30 cm) baking dish, at least 3 qt/2.8 L; 4 main-dish portions · Active 35 min · Total 1 hr 55 min

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cups dry pearl barley (250 g)
- 6 cups water (1.4 L), for barley, with extra boiling water only if needed to keep submerged
- 1 lb broccoli, small florets and peeled diced stem (450 g prepared)
- 1 cup water (240 ml), for steaming
- 2 tablespoons butter (30 g)
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped (150 g)
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour (18 g)
- 1 3/4 cups milk (420 ml)
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (5 g)
- 3 1/2 oz mature cheddar, grated (100 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt (1.5 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs (60 g)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (15 ml)
- 1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan (25 g)

Set out

Oven, 8×12 in (20×30 cm) baking dish, at least 3 qt/2.8 L, Rice saucepan with lid, at least 3 qt/2.8 L, Sieve, Steamer basket and covered pan, Medium saucepan, Whisk, Small bowl, Rimmed baking sheet, Food thermometer, Suitable foil for loose shielding if the topping colors before the center finishes

Allergens

Barley: gluten, Wheat, Milk, Mustard; check cheese and bread labels. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Rinse barley and put in its pan with 1.4 L water. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer gently 35–45 minutes, or its packet time, until tender with a little chew. Keep grains submerged with a little boiling water if needed. Drain well.

2. While barley cooks, heat oven to 400°F (205°C) and put the dish on a rimmed sheet. Steam diced broccoli stem over its water for 2 minutes, add florets and steam 3 minutes more until nearly tender. Spread out on a plate.

3. Melt butter in the medium pan over medium-low heat. Cook onion 7–9 minutes until soft. Stir in flour for 1 minute, then gradually whisk in milk. Simmer 3–4 minutes, stirring, until sauce coats a spoon. Take off the heat and stir in mustard, cheddar, salt and pepper.

4. Fold barley and broccoli into the sauce and spread in the dish. Mix breadcrumbs with olive oil and Parmesan and scatter loosely over the surface. Bake 25–30 minutes until golden and 165°F (74°C) in the center and several other places. Shield the crumb top loosely if needed while the center finishes.

5. Rest 5 minutes before serving four portions.

Give the grain a recognizable texture

Drain the barley without pressing it through the sieve. Its separate rounded grains are part of the pleasure of this bake, and should remain visible beside the broccoli.

A useful detail

The 115-minute total allows pearl-barley cooking, with vegetables and sauce made alongside it, plus assembly and the oven stage. Follow a longer packet time if needed. The topping uses fresh coarse crumbs; 60 g dry crumbs would have a different texture.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C), at 40°F (4°C) or below. Use within 3 days or an earlier ingredient deadline, keeping an earlier barley cooking date if applicable. Reheat to 165°F (74°C). Freeze promptly cooled portions for up to 1 month for quality; thaw in the refrigerator. Grains soften and the crumb surface loses crunch.