Beef Mushroom and Pearl Barley Soup

4 generous soup meals, each with one-quarter of the beef, barley, vegetables and broth · Active 55 min · Total 3 hr 20 min

Skills: Beginner with ordinary kitchen equipment

Ingredients

- 1 lb 5 oz boneless beef chuck arm roast, external fat removed, cut into 3/4-inch/2 cm cubes (600 g raw lean meat)
- 3/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon dry pearl barley, rinsed (160 g)
- About 4 cups sliced white mushrooms (300 g)
- 2 large carrots, diced (200 g prepared)
- 1 large onion, diced (150 g)
- 2 celery stalks, diced (100 g)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (6 g)
- 1/2 can crushed tomatoes with juice (200 g)
- About 7 1/2 cups water (1.8 liters), plus small hot-water additions if needed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (15 ml/about 13.5 g), divided
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves (1 g)
- 1 teaspoon fine salt (6 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper (1 g)

Set out

5-liter/about 5-quart heavy saucepan with lid, Tongs, Clean bowl for partially browned beef, Spoon and ladle, Knife and separate raw-meat board or cleaned board, Fine sieve, Kitchen scale, Measuring jug, Food thermometer, 4 shallow storage containers

Allergens

Barley (gluten). Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Prepare vegetables before raw beef. Pat trimmed beef cubes dry. Heat half the oil in the heavy saucepan over medium-high heat and brown half the beef for 5–6 minutes, turning. Move to a clean bowl and repeat with remaining oil and beef. The meat is only partially cooked at this stage.

2. Lower heat to medium. Add onion, carrot, celery and mushrooms to the same pot and cook for 9–11 minutes, stirring, until vegetables begin to soften. Add garlic for 30 seconds. Return beef and its juices, then add tomatoes, measured water, thyme, salt and pepper.

3. Bring to a boil, reduce to a gentle simmer, partly cover and cook for 45 minutes. Rinse barley and add it. Continue gently for 45–60 minutes, or the barley packet time, stirring occasionally, until barley has no hard center and beef is fork-tender. Tougher beef can take longer; add hot water if necessary to keep a soup consistency.

4. Check thick beef pieces and the soup are at least 165°F/74°C; the long simmer is also needed for tenderness, not just this temperature. Stand off the heat for 5 minutes. Stir and divide the entire pot into 4 equal shares of meat, grain and broth. Serve now or cool planned portions promptly as directed.

A useful kitchen skill

Keep separate clocks for a tough meat cut and an ordinary dry grain; tenderness and a measured heat check both matter.

A useful detail

The 200-minute total allows knife work, two browning batches, the initial beef simmer and a full barley stage. Tougher beef or slower barley can extend it. Raw lean-only chuck arm roast and dry pearl barley are the nutrient starting states.

Keep it well

Divide leftovers promptly into shallow containers, no more than about 2 inches/5 cm food depth, and refrigerate at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Do not wait for a deep pot or dish to cool on the counter. Use refrigerated portions within 3 days. Once chilled, seal, date and freeze at 0°F/−18°C for up to 2 months for quality. Thaw in the refrigerator and reheat the needed portion to 165°F/74°C throughout, stirring; add water if barley has thickened the broth.