

Chicken, Vegetable & Barley Soup with Fresh Basil & Lemon



By Ashley Alexander

Here's a deliciously hearty and nourishing soup. It's packed full of vegetables and satisfying fillings like lentils, beans, pearl barley, and chicken, yet still tastes fresh and light. This soup is perfect for making in bulk and freezing in batches for easy future lunches and dinners. It also stores well in the fridge in an airtight container for up to 4 days and can be frozen for up to 3 months.

SERVES 6 | **PREP TIME** 30 minutes | **COOK TIME** 1 hour 30 minutes | **TOTAL TIME** 2 hours

INGREDIENTS

- Extra virgin olive oil
- 4 chicken thighs
- Pinch of chili flakes
- 1 medium to large brown onion, finely chopped
- 4 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 2 medium to large carrots, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped 'woody herbs' (thyme, sage, rosemary, oregano - one or a mix; I've used fresh sage and thyme)
- 5 fresh bay leaves
- 6 large cloves garlic (5 finely sliced, 1 kept whole)
- 3/4 cup dry pearl barley, soaked in water overnight (you can also use farro or brown rice; the brown rice doesn't need to be soaked overnight)
- 1.5 litres of good quality chicken stock/broth
- 1 x 400g can lentils, drained
- 1 x 400g can beans of your choice, drained (I've used borlotti)
- 1 large parmesan rind or 2-3 small pieces of rind (optional)
- 1 large zucchini, finely chopped
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Juice of half a lemon
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves (roughly 1 large bunch)
- 2 cups finely shredded silverbeet (or kale; if using silverbeet, finely chop the stalks and add them too)
- Sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste

METHOD

1. Soak the barley overnight in a bowl with cold water. You can soak it for up to two days. If you're short on time, place the dry barley in a bowl, cover it with boiling water, and set aside until ready to add to the soup.
2. Ensure all veggies and ingredients are cut and prepped.
3. In a large saucepan, add a generous glug of olive oil and place over high heat.

4. Add the chicken thighs and sear until browned. At this stage, we don't want to cook the chicken but instead brown the outside for maximum flavour.
5. Once browned, remove from the heat, place into a bowl then set aside. Don't worry if any chicken has stuck to the bottom of the pan; this will add great flavour.
6. In the same pot, add the finely chopped onion, celery, carrot, and finely chopped silverbeet stalks. Add the finely chopped herbs, bay leaves, and a pinch of sea salt. Sauté for a few minutes.
7. Add the garlic slices and sauté for a minute or two.
8. Drain and add the pearl barley and chicken stock, stirring to combine.
9. Add back the browned chicken and any juices from the bowl, then add the parmesan rind.
10. Ensure the chicken is covered with stock, then place the lid on the pot and leave to simmer for 1 hour.
11. After an hour, remove and discard the parmesan rind and bay leaves.
12. Remove the chicken and set aside in a bowl.
13. Add the drained beans, lentils, and finely chopped zucchini. Simmer for 5 minutes.
14. While the soup is simmering, roughly chop the cooked chicken and add it back into the soup.
15. Grate or crush the single clove of garlic directly into the soup.
16. Add the zest of 1 lemon, the juice of half a lemon, and salt to taste.
17. Add the fresh basil leaves and silverbeet, stirring to combine.
18. Simmer for 1-2 minutes until the silverbeet and basil are wilted and vibrant green.
19. Dish and top with fresh basil leaves, parmesan, black pepper, and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil (optional).

NOTES

If you prefer or need a gluten-free option, you can substitute pearl barley with farro, or brown rice. Note that brown rice does not require soaking overnight.

Soaking barley overnight helps it cook faster and more evenly. If you forget, you can cover the barley with boiling water and let it sit while you prepare the other ingredients.

The recipe calls for 'woody herbs' such as thyme, sage, rosemary, and oregano. You can use a mix or choose your favourite. Fresh herbs are ideal, but dried herbs can be used in smaller quantities if fresh are not available.

Adding a parmesan rind enhances the soup's umami flavour. If you don't have a parmesan rind, grated parmesan can be added at the end, or you can omit it for a dairy-free version.

If the soup is too thick, you can add more chicken stock or water to reach your desired consistency. If it's too thin, let it simmer longer with the lid off to reduce.

This soup stores well in the refrigerator for up to 4 days and can be frozen for up to 3 months. When reheating, you may need to add a bit of extra stock or water as the barley will continue to absorb liquid.

Add the lemon zest and juice towards the end of cooking to maintain their bright, fresh flavour. Taste the soup before serving and adjust the lemon juice, salt, and pepper to suit your preference.

Adding a fresh clove of grated or crushed garlic at the end of cooking provides a nice punch of flavour after the soup has been simmering for a while.



Find the recipe and watch the video online:

<https://www.gatherandfeast.com/chicken-vegetable-barley-soup-fresh-basil-lemon>

Let me know if you make the recipe! x **@gatherandfeast**