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by Liz Robb

Winter Vegetable, Pea and Pearl Barley Soup

Ingredients

60g pearl barley
60g dried pea mix
1 onion
2 leeks
2 sticks of celery
150g swede
3 large carrots
1 parsnip
1 medium sweet potato
1 tablespoon of olive oil
A large knob of butter
A few sprigs of fresh thyme
400g can of chopped tomatoes
1.3 litres of chicken stock
Salt and freshly milled black pepper
2-3 teaspoons of paprika
A small red chilli [optional]

Preparation

1. Soak the pearl barley and the peas overnight in plenty of cold water.
2. First prepare the vegetables. Peel and chop the onion finely. Trim and slice the leeks and the celery thinly. Peel the swede, carrots, parsnip and sweet potato and dice them fairly small.
3. Heat the oil and the butter together in a very large saucepan then sauté the chopped onion gently for 2-3 minutes to soften it. Add the rest of the vegetables, stir and cook over a low heat for about 5 minutes.
4. Add the thyme leaves then stir in the chopped tomatoes and the hot stock. Add the paprika and season well with salt and black pepper. I like to add a small red chilli too, chopped very finely, but you can leave this out if you prefer. Bring to the boil then simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 45 minutes, until the peas and barley are cooked and all the vegetables are soft.

Cooks Note

Served with a slice or two of fresh wholemeal bread, a bowl of this soup makes a really tasty and filling winter lunch or supper.

This recipe will make a big panful, enough to feed 6-8 people. It will keep in the fridge for a few days, or it will freeze well; it may become a bit too thick when you reheat it so just add a little more stock.

If you don't have dried peas or pearl barley, you could replace them with lentils.If you prefer, you could use potato instead of the sweet potato.
Bay leaves can be added instead of fresh thyme, and chopped parsley, stirred in at the end of the cooking time, tastes good too.
Include your own favourite vegetables, or whatever you have that needs eating up; squashes, turnip and celeriac would work well, or perhaps some chopped courgette or frozen peas added later on in the cooking time.