

Low-Glycemic Mushroom & Pearl Barley Soup

A blood sugar-friendly vegetarian soup packed with fiber-rich barley and umami mushrooms that keeps you satisfied without the glucose spike.

Prep: 30 min

Cook: 30 min

Total: 60 min

Servings: 6

GL 4.6 / GI 21

Ingredients

Soak in hot water to rehydrate; reserve soaking liquid for depth of flavor dried porcini mushrooms

Healthy monounsaturated fat that slows glucose absorption extra virgin olive oil

Low GI aromatic base; contains chromium which supports insulin function medium onion, finely diced

Moderate GI when cooked in soup; fiber content helps moderate glucose impact large carrots, diced

May help improve insulin sensitivity garlic cloves, finely chopped

Anti-inflammatory herb that may support metabolic health fresh rosemary, chopped, or dried

Very low GI; high in fiber and protein with minimal carbohydrate impact fresh chestnut mushrooms, finely chopped

Use low-sodium variety to control blood pressure alongside blood sugar low-sodium vegetable stock

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Adds depth; alcohol content cooks off, minimal glycemic impact dry marsala wine or dry sherry

Concentrated tomato flavor; low GI and rich in lycopene tomato purée

Excellent low-GI grain (GI=28); high in soluble fiber that stabilizes blood sugar pearl barley

Optional; adds protein and fat which further lowers the meal's glycemic response freshly grated Parmesan cheese, for serving

Instructions

Step 1

Place the dried porcini mushrooms in a heatproof bowl and cover with 250ml of freshly boiled water. Set aside to soak for 25 minutes, allowing the mushrooms to fully rehydrate and release their earthy flavor into the liquid.

Step 2

While the porcini soak, heat the olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed soup pot over medium heat. Add the diced onion, carrots, chopped garlic, and rosemary. Season with a pinch of sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Sauté for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables soften and become fragrant.

Step 3

Drain the rehydrated porcini mushrooms through a fine-mesh sieve lined with cheesecloth or a coffee filter, carefully reserving every drop of the flavorful soaking liquid. Finely chop the softened porcini mushrooms and set aside.

Step 4

Add both the chopped porcini and fresh chestnut mushrooms to the pot with the softened vegetables. Increase the heat slightly and cook for 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until the fresh mushrooms release their moisture and begin to brown at the edges.

Step 5

Pour in the vegetable stock, reserved porcini soaking liquid, marsala wine (if using), and tomato purée. Stir well to combine. Add the rinsed pearl barley and bring the mixture to a vigorous boil over high heat.

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Step 6

Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and maintain a gentle simmer. Cook uncovered for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the pearl barley is tender and has absorbed much of the liquid. The barley should be soft but still have a pleasant, slightly chewy texture.

Step 7

Check the consistency of the soup. If it has become too thick, add additional vegetable stock or water, 100ml at a time, until you reach your desired consistency. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional salt and pepper as needed.

Step 8

Ladle the hot soup into warmed bowls. If using, sprinkle freshly grated Parmesan cheese over each serving. For optimal blood sugar management, consider eating a small side salad before the soup, and pair with a lean protein if desired. The soup stores well in the refrigerator for up to 4 days and freezes beautifully for up to 3 months.