

Chicken & Barley Soup

The New York Times predicts soup is going to be huge this coming year which is shocking because up until now no one had even heard of it. I have to admit that I'm feeling a wee bit smug about being so ahead of the curve. I mean I have literally been eating soup for decades. It makes me wonder who soup was up against for the title? Maybe other unknowns like oatmeal or toast? Regardless, I'm thrilled for soup and all the publicity this recognition will bring. Before you know it every one will be eating soup.

All joking aside, after a holiday season of cheese boards, cookies and cocktails a simple soup is just what is called for. The whole pot comes together in about 30 minutes and will keep in the fridge all week long. It will thicken up as the days go on but just add a little water to thin it when rewarming.

I hope you'll make this recipe using the homemade chicken stock I demonstrated on instagram a couple of months ago but if not, no worries. Boxed chicken stock will work fine but you may want to be a little more generous with salt as it can be a little bland. I've given some specific measurements and some not so specific ones. The truth of the matter is you really can't screw it up. If you don't like dill, skip it. If you have three carrots to use up instead of two, feel free though I'd warn you against increasing the barley unless you want more of a stew than soup.

2 tbsp olive oil

1 shallot, finely diced

4 stalks celery, finely dices

2 large carrots, peeled and finely diced

1 big handful fresh parsley, finely chopped

1 small handful fresh dill, finely chopped

1 tiny handful fresh thyme leaves

2 cups cooked chicken meat, 1/2-inch cubes

3/4 cup pearl barley

2 litres chicken stock

Salt & pepper

Makes: 6 to 8 servings

In a large pot over medium-high heat, add the olive oil and minced shallot. Season with salt and pepper and cook for several minutes until the shallot starts to soften. Add the carrots and celery and continue to cook for 8 to 10 minutes more, until the vegetables have also started to soften.

Add the chicken stock, herbs, diced chicken and barley to the pot and stir to combine. Bring the soup to a boil, cover with lid and then reduce heat until just simmering. Allow the soup to cook for another 20 to 25 minutes, until the barley is fully cooked through and soft. Taste for seasoning and add more salt and pepper if you feel it needs it.