

Vegetable Barley Stew

Rice or barley stew seasoned with miso or umeboshi is the Japanese mother's cure-all. Maitake adds its healing and rejuvenating qualities to make an even more powerful dish. Enjoy this creamy, soothing stew anytime during the colder months, especially when you feel weak or out of balance. Make plenty - this dish tastes best a day or two after it is made.

Wash barley and place it in a large soup pot along with the maitake, water, and if desired, kombu. Use a small plate or bowl to keep mushrooms submerged. Soak for 1 hour.

Remove kombu and reserve it for another use. Remove and chop maitake, and return them to the pot. Bring the soup to a boil, and add salt and bay leaf. Reduce heat and simmer, with lid ajar, until barley is tender - about 45 minutes. (Cook longer for a creamier texture.) Add the oregano and all of the vegetables except the kale. Simmer 10 minutes. Add kale and simmer 15 minutes more. Remove from heat.

Dilute the miso in a little water and add it to the stew. Serve hot, garnished with minced parsley or green onion, if desired.

Preparation List:

Serves 6

- 1 cup barley
- 2/3 cup dried maitake
- 12 cups water
- 6-inch piece kombu (optional)
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1 bay leaf (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano (optional)
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 leek, white part only (slit lengthwise to center, rinse well to remove dirt between the layers, and slice)
- 2 large carrots, cut in half lengthwise, then into 1/8-inch-thick half moons
- 1 rib celery, sliced
- 2 cups chopped kale or other leafy greens
- 2-3 tablespoons brown rice or barley miso, or to taste
- minced parsley or slivered green onion, to garnish