

Mushroom Barley Soup

Serves 8

¼ cup dried mushrooms
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large onion, diced
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
2 celery stalks, with leaves, diced
3 cloves garlic, finely minced
1 pound fresh mushrooms, thickly sliced (I like crimini-brown button mushrooms)
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
8 cups beef stock (or chicken or vegetable)
¾ cup pearl barley (or farro)
2 teaspoons kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup chopped flat leaf (Italian) parsley
¼ cup chopped fresh dill
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar

1. Soak the dried mushrooms in enough hot water to cover for 30 minutes. Strain mushroom through a paper coffee filter. Reserve the strained liquid. Coarsely chop dried mushrooms.
2. Heat oil in a large stockpot. Add onion, carrot, celery and garlic and sauté on medium-high heat for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add fresh mushrooms and sauté for about another 5 minutes until they have given off their liquid. Add dried mushrooms and cook for another minute.
3. Turn heat to low, add flour and cook for another 5 minutes, stirring every minute or so, until thick. Mix in tomato paste.
4. In a separate pot, heat stock or water to boiling. Add hot liquid to vegetables in stockpot, gradually, stirring well with each addition of liquid. Bring soup to a boil. Turn down to a simmer. Add reserved mushroom liquid, barley (or farro) salt and pepper and simmer covered for about one hour, until barley is tender.
5. Add chopped dill and parsley just before serving.

If you want to make the soup to freeze, do not add fresh herbs before freezing. You can add the fresh herbs after thawing and reheating.