

Split Pea, Barley and Spinach Soup

Recipe adapted from marthastewart.com. When shopping for barley, you will often see two types, pot barley and pearl barley. The pot barley is unhulled, meaning the outer layer has not been removed. While pot barley takes a bit longer to cook, it contains more fiber than pearl barley. I like to cook the barley separately from the soup as I find it gets too mushy in the soup. I prefer it with a chewy texture.

Serves 6-8

- 1 cup pot barley (unhulled)
- 3 leeks, white and light-green parts only
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped into ½ inch dice
- 2 celery stalks, chopped into ½ inch dice
- ¼-½ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 8 cups low-sodium vegetable broth or water, or a combination
- 2 cups dried split green peas, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon Diamond Crystal Kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 5 ounces baby spinach
- ½ cup full-fat plain yogurt (not Greek), whisked, for serving
- ½ cup crispy shallots for garnish (recipe below), optional but very delicious.

1. Bring 3 cups of water to a boil. Add ½ teaspoon salt. Add 1 cup pot barley. Reduce heat to low, cover pot and simmer for 40-45 minutes. Taste barley to check the texture. If necessary, cook for an additional 5 minutes. Drain any excess water (there should be very little, if any). Spread barley out on a baking sheet to cool and set aside.
2. Cut leeks in half, lengthwise, and slice across into ¼ inch thickness. Place sliced leeks in a large bowl filled with cold water. Swish leeks around for a minute, to help loosen any sand. Lift out sliced leeks with your hands, leaving the sandy water behind.
3. Heat oil in a large pot over medium. Add leeks, carrots, and celery; cook, stirring, until tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Add red pepper flakes, bay leaves and thyme sprigs. You can just throw the whole sprigs in, no need to remove leaves first. You will remove them at the end, before blending. Add salt and pepper and stir for 30 seconds to combine everything.

4. Add broth and split peas; bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook, partially covered, until peas are creamy, 50 to 55 minutes. Remove bay leaves and thyme sprigs. Stir in spinach; cook until just wilted, about 5 minutes. Let cool slightly.
5. Working in batches, puree soup in a blender until smooth. Return to pot. Taste and season with additional salt and pepper if needed. (If too thick, add water, 1 tablespoon at a time.) Ladle soup into bowls, drizzle with yogurt. Top with barley and crispy shallots, if using, and serve.

Crispy Shallots

4 large shallots, peeled and thinly sliced (use a mandoline if you have one, you want them to be about the thickness of a dime.)

1¼ cups vegetable oil

½ teaspoon kosher salt

1. Place shallots and oil into a medium saucepan. You do not need to preheat oil first. Cook on high heat just until the oil begins to bubble. Turn down heat to low and continue cooking until shallots are a nice golden brown. Give them a stir every 30 seconds. Don't walk away, they can burn quickly. It will take 4-5 minutes.
2. Scoop shallots out of hot oil with a slotted spoon or small strainer and set them on a paper towel lined baking sheet to drain. Salt them while they are still hot. They will stay crisp in a covered container for about a week. You can strain the used oil and use the flavoured oil in a salad dressing if desired.