

# Vegetable Barley Soup

## Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 zucchini, diced (optional but lovely for texture)
- 1 can (14 oz) diced tomatoes (or about 2 medium fresh tomatoes, chopped)
- 6 cups vegetable broth (or chicken broth for a heartier version)
- ½ cup pearl barley, rinsed
- 1 tsp dried thyme (or 1 tbsp fresh)
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

## Instructions

1. Heat olive oil and butter in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the onion, carrots, and celery, and cook for about 5 minutes until they begin to soften.
2. Stir in the garlic, thyme, and bay leaf. Cook for another minute until fragrant.
3. Add the diced tomatoes and broth. Stir to combine, scraping up any bits from the bottom of the pot.
4. Stir in the rinsed barley and bring to a gentle boil. Lower the heat and let it simmer uncovered for about 30–40 minutes, or until the barley is tender and the soup thickens slightly.
5. Add the diced zucchini (if using) and simmer for 5 more minutes. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed.
6. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with chopped parsley before serving.

## Note & Storage

- For a lighter version, replace barley with ½ cup orzo and simmer just until tender.
- You can use chicken broth instead of vegetable broth for a deeper, savory flavor.
- Add a handful of fresh spinach or kale near the end for extra color and warmth.
- The soup will naturally thicken as it cools; add a splash of broth or water when reheating.
- Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.
- Reheat gently on the stove over low heat, adding a little broth if it's too thick.
- This soup also freezes well for up to 2 months — thaw overnight in the fridge before warming.