

Seasonal Eating

Barley, Beef and Mushroom Soup

1 pound boneless beef chuck, cut into 1/2" pieces
salt and pepper to taste
2 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 large onion, chopped
1 cup sliced baby carrot
8 ounces mushrooms, halved or quartered
1 tablespoon tomato paste
3 cups beef broth
3 cups water
3 bay leaves
3/4 cup quick cooking barley

Season beef with salt and pepper. Heat 1 1/2 tablespoons of the oil in a large, heavy pot over high heat. Brown the meat on all sides, 8-10 minutes. Stir in the balsamic vinegar and cook for an additional 30 seconds. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the meat to a plate. If there is no fat left in the pot, add the remaining tablespoon of oil. Add the onion, carrots and fresh mushrooms. Season with a sprinkling of salt. Cook over medium high heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables soften, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for a minute or two. Add the browned beef, beef broth, water and bay leaves. Bring the soup to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, until the beef is tender, about 60-90 minutes. Stir in the barley and simmer another 15 minutes until barley is puffed up and tender. Remove the bay leaves and serve hot.