

NONNA'S BEEF BARLEY SOUP

Cooking Times

- **Prep time:** 20 minutes
 - **Cook time:** 1 hour 40 minutes
 - **Servings:** 6
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Ingredients

- **1 1/2 lb** beef chuck (or brisket), cut into 1-inch cubes
 - **1 cup** pearled barley, rinsed
 - **2 tbsp** extra-virgin olive oil
 - **1 medium** yellow onion, finely chopped
 - **2 medium** carrots, diced
 - **2 ribs** celery, diced
 - **3 cloves** garlic, smashed or minced
 - **2 tbsp** tomato paste
 - **1 can (14.5 oz)** diced tomatoes *or* **1 1/2 cups** tomato purée/passata (optional but recommended)
 - **8 cups** beef broth (or **6 cups** broth + **2 cups** water)
 - **1** bay leaf
 - **1** rosemary sprig (or **1/2 tsp** dried rosemary)
 - **1 tsp** kosher salt, plus more to taste
 - **1/2 tsp** black pepper, plus more to taste
 - **1** Parmigiano Reggiano rind (optional, but amazing for flavor)
 - **1 tbsp** red wine vinegar *or* fresh lemon juice (optional, for finishing)
 - Chopped fresh parsley, for serving
 - Optional veggies: **1 cup** diced potato *or* **1 cup** cut green beans
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Instructions

1. **Brown the beef.** Heat olive oil in a large heavy pot over medium-high heat. Pat beef dry, then brown in 2–3 batches until nicely colored. Transfer beef to a plate.
 2. **Build the soffritto.** Reduce heat to medium. Add onion, carrots, and celery. Cook 8–10 minutes until softened, scraping up browned bits. Add garlic and cook 30 seconds.
 3. **Toast the tomato paste.** Stir in tomato paste and cook 1 minute to deepen flavor.
 4. **Add liquids and aromatics.** Return beef to the pot. Add diced tomatoes (if using), broth, bay leaf, rosemary, salt, pepper, and the Parmigiano Reggiano rind (if using).
 5. **Simmer until tender.** Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce to a **low simmer** (partially covered) for **60–75 minutes**, until beef is tender.
 6. **Cook the barley.** Stir in rinsed barley. Simmer **25–35 minutes**, stirring occasionally, until barley is tender.
 7. **Adjust consistency.** If the soup thickens too much, add a splash of hot broth or water.
 8. **Finish.** Remove bay leaf, rosemary sprig, and Parmigiano rind. Taste and adjust salt/pepper. Stir in vinegar or lemon juice (optional) to brighten.
 9. **Serve.** Ladle into bowls, top with parsley, and (optional) a little grated **Parmigiano Reggiano**.
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Tips & Tricks

- **Parmigiano Reggiano rind = secret weapon.** It melts flavor into the broth and adds a subtle, savory richness.
- **For leftovers:** Barley keeps absorbing liquid. Add extra broth when reheating, or cook barley separately and add to bowls as needed.
- **Best beef cuts:** Chuck is ideal—rich and tender after simmering.
- **More Italian, less “tomatoey”:** Use only tomato paste (skip diced tomatoes) for a cleaner brodo-style soup.
- **Freezer tip:** Freeze without barley for best texture; add freshly cooked barley when serving.