

Spring Vegetable Minestrone

with Barley & Lemon-Ricotta Toasts

Minestrone is an ancient Italian dish. Recipes for it date back all the way to the 1st Century CE. And there's a reason it continues to stick around: it's an incredibly satisfying combination of grains and vegetables, simmered to tender perfection. Our version features spring asparagus, leek and sugar snap peas, along with barley and authentic seasonings. And for a delicious finishing touch, we're cooling the hearty soup with a dollop of lemon-dressed ricotta, which we're also spreading onto a crispy side of baguette toasts.



Ingredients

- ¾ Cup Part-Skim Ricotta Cheese
- 1 Cup Pearled Barley
- 1 Small Baguette
- 4 Ounces Sugar Snap Peas
- 2 Ounces Arugula
- 2 Carrots
- 1 Leek
- 1 Lemon
- 1 Bunch Asparagus
- 1 Pound Russet Potatoes

Knick Knacks

- 2 Tablespoons Tomato Paste
- ¼ Cup Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 2 Teaspoons Spring Minestrone Spice Blend
(Ground Fennel Seeds, Dried Bay Leaf Powder, Dried Lemon Peel, Garlic Powder & Crushed Aleppo Pepper)

Makes 4 Servings

About 610 Calories Per Serving

Cooking Time: 25 to 35 minutes



1



Cook the barley:

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Heat a small pot of salted water to boiling on high. Once boiling, add the **barley** and cook 18 to 20 minutes, or until al dente (still slightly firm to the bite). Drain thoroughly.

2



Prepare the ingredients:

While the barley cooks, wash and dry the fresh produce. Slice the baguette crosswise into 1-inch-thick pieces. Cut the sugar snap peas into ½-inch pieces. Peel the carrots and thinly slice into rounds. Snap off and discard the tough, woody ends of the asparagus; cut the asparagus into ½-inch pieces. Trim off and discard the root ends and upper, dark-green leaves of the leeks. Halve the leeks lengthwise; thoroughly rinse between the layers with cold water. Thinly slice the leeks. Quarter and deseed the lemon. Small dice the potatoes.

3



Cook the vegetables:

While the barley continues to cook, in a large pot, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil on medium-high until hot. Add the **carrots, potatoes, leek** and **spice blend**; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, 3 to 5 minutes, or until softened and fragrant. Add the **tomato paste** and cook, stirring frequently, 1 to 2 minutes, or until fragrant and dark red.

4



Make the broth:

Add **5 cups of water** to the pot of vegetables; season with salt and pepper. Heat to boiling on high. Once boiling, reduce the heat to medium-low. Add the **cooked barley** and simmer, stirring occasionally, 10 to 12 minutes, or until the liquid is slightly reduced in volume.

5



Make the lemon-ricotta toasts:

While the soup simmers, place the **baguette slices** on a sheet pan. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Arrange in a single, even layer and toast in the oven 4 to 6 minutes, or until lightly browned. While the baguette slices toast, in a medium bowl, combine the **ricotta cheese** and **the juice of 2 lemon wedges**; season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove the toasted baguette slices from the oven and top with **half the lemon-ricotta mixture**. Transfer to a serving dish.

6



Finish & serve your dish:

Add the **sugar snap peas, asparagus** and **1 cup of water** to the pot of broth; season with salt and pepper. Simmer, stirring occasionally, 1 to 2 minutes, or until the sugar snap peas and asparagus are bright green and tender. Stir in the **Parmesan cheese, arugula** and **the juice of the remaining lemon wedges**; season with salt and pepper to taste. Divide the **finished soup** between 4 bowls. Top each with ¼ of the remaining **lemon-ricotta mixture**. Enjoy!