

October 16, 2009
Release Date: October 21, 2009

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BRING ON THE BARLEY

In the U.S. we consume lots of barley but not in the form of food. It's used to make beer, tons of beer. Forty-four percent of barely grown in America is used to make spirits, while only 2% is used for food. The rest is produced for animal feed. When I examined the nutritional value of barley, I question why the food industry hasn't been more creative in manufacturing products for human consumption.

Barley, a whole grain, is a rich source of dietary fiber, both soluble and insoluble fiber. One cup of cooked pearled barley provides 193 calories, 4 grams of protein, 44 grams of carbohydrate and 6 grams of fiber. Virtually fat, cholesterol, and sodium free, it's a good choice for everyone's diet. One cup cooked contains 2.5 grams soluble fiber and 1/2 cup uncooked barley flakes contains 2 grams. The soluble fiber is beta-glucagon and clinical studies have found it lowers total and LDL cholesterol, possibly better than oats.

Since the research on soluble fiber has been primarily on oats, the USDA Diet & Human Performance Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland is conducting long-term studies on adults on how barley affects cholesterol and blood lipids. This data is used to support an application to the Food and Drug Administration for a health claim for barley similar to that for oats. You can read more at <http://www.barleyfoods.org/documents/BarleyConwayarticle.pdf>

To add barely to your diet you have three choices of items – pearl barley, barley cereals (hot and cold), and barley flour. Pearl barley is the item most readily available and typically found next to rice and dry beans in your local supermarket and is used to make beef and barley. There are other uses besides soup and the National Barley Foods Association sent us some favorite recipes to include with the article. One downside to using pearl barley is how long it takes to cook, 45 minutes on the stove and 1 hour 45 minutes in a slow cooker. Because of this Quaker offers a fast cooking barley that cooks in only 10 minutes but I find it's not as flavorful.

For the baker, try substituting barley flour to add a subtle nutty flavor and fiber. Use barley flour in combination with all-purpose enriched wheat or whole wheat flour to insure adequate rising. Barley flour may be substituted for about 1/4 of the total flour used in yeast breads. For most quick breads, muffins, cookies and bars, barley flour may be substituted for about 1/2 of the total flour. You can find barley flour typically in the special foods section, a popular brands is Bob's Red Mill. The Common Market, a food co-op in Frederick, sells it in bulk.

LAMB AND BARLEY CASSEROLE

1 pound ground lamb, cooked, crumbled and drained
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
1/2 cup sliced celery
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 cup pearl barley
1 tablespoon curry powder
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 cups fat-free chicken broth
Prepared mint sauce or mango chutney, optional

In large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion, celery and garlic; sauté for 4 minutes. Stir in barley and sauté until golden brown. Blend in curry powder, pepper and salt; cook for 1 minute. Stir in broth and bring to a boil. Mix in cooked lamb. Spray 9 x 13-inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. Carefully pour mixture into baking dish. Cover with foil and bake in preheated 350° F oven for 30 minutes. Carefully remove foil and stir. Cover and bake 30 to 60 minutes longer or until barley is tender and liquid is absorbed. Serve with mint sauce or mango chutney, if desired. Makes 8 servings.

BARLEY ORANGE PILAF

3 cups water
1 cup pearl barley
1/2 cup chopped pitted dates
1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
3 tablespoons orange marmalade
3/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/2 cup slivered and toasted almonds

In medium saucepan with lid bring water to a boil. Add barley and return to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook 45 minutes or until barley is tender and liquid is absorbed. Set aside. Spray large skillet with non-stick cooking spray; add dates, apricots and marmalade. Cook over medium heat, stirring, for 3 minutes. Blend in cumin, salt and pepper. Simmer 2 minutes longer. Stir in cooked barley and almonds. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook until warmed through. Makes 4 servings.

CONFETTI BARLEY SALAD

3 cups water
1 cup pearl barley
1 can (15-1/4 ounces) kidney beans, drained
1 can (15 ounces) mandarin oranges, drained
2/3 cup finely chopped red onion
1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper
1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves
2/3 cup white wine vinegar
1/3 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons granulated sugar

1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon chili powder
1 teaspoon dry mustard
10 drops red pepper sauce

In medium saucepan with lid, bring water to a boil. Add pearl barley and return to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook 45 minutes or until barley is tender and liquid is absorbed. In large bowl combine cooked barley, beans, oranges, onion, bell pepper and cilantro. Set aside. In a small saucepan mix together vinegar, olive oil, sugar, salt, pepper, chili powder, dry mustard and pepper sauce. Heat and stir until mixture bubbles. Pour hot dressing over barley-vegetable mixture. Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours or overnight to allow salad to chill and flavors to blend. Makes 8 servings.

BARLEY TABBOULEH

1 tablespoon olive oil
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 cup pearl barley
2-1/4 cups fat free chicken broth
1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper
1/2 cup chopped peeled cucumber
1/2 cup pitted and halved Kalamata olives
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh mint leaves
1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese (plus additional for garnish)

In 2-quart saucepan with lid, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Stir in barley and cook for 2 minutes. Mix in broth and bring to a boil. Lower heat to a simmer. Cover and cook 45 minutes or until most of the liquid is absorbed. Remove from heat, cover and let stand for 10 minutes. Cool and refrigerate. Pour chilled barley into serving bowl. Stir in bell pepper, cucumber, olives, mint, parsley and feta. Pour Lemon Vinaigrette over salad and toss. Garnish with a sprinkle of additional feta cheese, if desired, and serve. Makes 8 servings.

Lemon Vinaigrette

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 teaspoons Dijon-style mustard
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
Combine all ingredients in small jar. Shake to mix well.

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, LDN, is a licensed Registered Dietitian and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences. For more information about the Frederick County Extension Office check out our website <http://www.Frederick.umd.edu/>

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