Mushroom & Barley Soup

Serves 4 to 6 | Active Time: 40 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour

Step 1: Cooking the Barley

- 1/2 cup pearl barley
- 1 1/2 cups stock
- 1/2 tsp sea salt, or to taste

To cook the barley, place it into a small pot along with the stock and salt. Bring it to a boil over medium-high heat. Once it comes to a boil, reduce the heat to a low simmer, cover, and let cook for about 30-35 minutes, or until it has cooked through but still has a nice bite.

Note: For the salt, the amount needed will depend on personal preference and also on the stock used — we used this Faux Chicken Bouillon Powder, which is not super salty.

Once the barley is tender, turn off the heat and keep it covered while you finish the soup.

- 1 oz (30 g) dried, porcini mushrooms
- 1 1/2 cups boiling water
- 1 cup minced shallots (approx. 4 shallots)
- 1 tbsp minced garlic, (approx. 2 cloves)
- 1 cup finely diced celery (approx. 2 stalks)
- 10 cups sliced cremini mushrooms (approx. 1 1/2 lbs / 680 g)

To start, rehydrate the porcini mushrooms with the boiling water. Once the porcini mushrooms are soft and rehydrated, remove them from the liquid and strain through a sieve lined with a coffee filter or cheesecloth. This will help to remove any grit. Make sure to reserve the mushroom liquid, as it will add lots of flavor to the soup.

Next, roughly chop up the porcini mushrooms and then prepare the rest of the aromatics and slice the fresh mushrooms.

Step 3: Cooking the Soup

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp sea salt, to taste
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbsp cassava flour (or all-purpose for non-gluten-free)
- 1 cup dry sherry (or other fortified wine)
- 3 1/2 cups stock

To cook the soup, heat a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Once hot, add the oil, followed by the shallots and celery. Sauté for about 3 to 4 minutes, or until softened and translucent.

Next, add the mushrooms and a good pinch of salt, and some freshly ground black pepper. Immediately turn up the heat to high. Cook, stirring occasionally until the mushrooms release their juices and start to brown slightly. This should take about 10 minutes or so.

Once the mushrooms are golden brown, turn the heat down to medium-high, and add the rehydrated porcini mushrooms and garlic. Let this cook for about 30 seconds before deglazing with the sherry. Once almost all of the sherry has evaporated, sprinkle the mixture with the flour. Stir in the flour and let cook for about a minute.

Next, add the reserved mushroom liquid and while stirring, add the stock. For the stock, we use this Faux Chicken Bouillon Powder or this Simple Mushroom Stock. Bring the soup to a gentle boil, before reducing the heat. let the soup simmer for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Step 4: Finishing the Soup

- 1 to 2 tbsp finely chopped sage (approx. 4 to 5 leaves), to taste
- 1/2 to 1 cup Cashew Sour Cream
- 2 to 4 tbsp horseradish, optional

To finish the soup, stir in the barley and sage and taste for seasoning, adding a bit more salt, pepper, and/or a bit of the Faux Chicken Bouillon Powder, as desired. The powder works great as a seasoning and to add a bit more depth to dishes.

Once you are happy with the seasoning, let the soup sit for a few minutes before serving. At this point, the soup is perfectly delicious to be served as is. However, for a richer, creamier soup, serve it with a big dollop of Cashew Sour Cream, (see notes in images for seasoning the sour cream) and for a bit of extra kick, serve it with a teaspoon or so of horseradish as well.