

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
 - Cook Time: 1 hour 10 minutes
 - Total Time: 1 hour 25 minutes
 - Servings: 6-8
 - Difficulty: Easy
 - Intensity Level: Low-Moderate (one-pot cooking with occasional stirring)
 - Cuisine: American Comfort Food
 - Method: Stovetop simmer
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Ingredients

For the Soup:

- 1 lb (450 g) lean ground beef (85/15 recommended)
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into rounds
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 8 cups (1.9 L) beef broth
- 1 can (14.5 oz / 411 g) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (8 oz / 227 g) tomato sauce

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (150 g) pearl barley, rinsed
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt (adjust to taste)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)

Optional Add-Ins:

- 1 cup frozen peas or corn (add in the last 10 minutes)

- 1 cup sliced mushrooms (sauté with the onions)
 - A pinch of red pepper flakes for heat
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Equipment

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed soup pot (5–6 quart)
 - Wooden spoon
 - Measuring cups and spoons
 - Ladle
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Instructions

Step 1: Brown the Beef (Time: 6–8 minutes | Intensity: Moderate)

Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat (about 375°F / 190°C). Add the ground beef and cook, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon, until fully browned and no pink remains—about 6–8 minutes. Drain excess fat, leaving about 1 tablespoon in the pot.

Step 2: Sauté the Aromatics (Time: 5-7 minutes | Intensity: Moderate)

Reduce heat to medium (350°F / 175°C). Add the diced onion, carrots, and celery. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften and the onion turns translucent—about 5–7 minutes. Add the minced garlic and cook for 1 minute more until fragrant.

Step 3: Build the Base (Time: 2-3 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Stir in the oregano, thyme, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper. Cook for 30 seconds to toast the spices. Pour in the Worcestershire sauce and scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot.

Step 4: Add Liquids and Barley (Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Add the beef broth, diced tomatoes with their juices, tomato sauce, and rinsed barley. Stir well and drop in the bay leaf. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil over medium-high heat (about 8–10 minutes).

Step 5: Simmer (Time: 45-50 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Once boiling, reduce heat to low (maintain a gentle simmer, around 195–205°F / 90–96°C). Cover partially with a lid and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the barley is tender and the soup has thickened—about 45–50 minutes.

Step 6: Finish and Adjust (Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Remove the bay leaf. If using frozen peas or corn, stir them in now and simmer for 5 minutes. Taste and adjust salt and pepper as needed. If the soup becomes too thick, thin it with a splash of beef broth or water.

Step 7: Rest and Serve (Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: None)

Let the soup rest off the heat for 5 minutes to allow the flavors to meld. Ladle into bowls and garnish with fresh chopped parsley. Serve with crusty bread or a side salad.

Cook's Notes & Tips

- Barley choice: Pearl barley cooks in about 45–50 minutes. If using hulled barley, add 20–30 minutes to the simmer time and extra broth as needed.
 - Make-ahead: This soup tastes even better the next day. Store in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.
 - Freezing: Freeze in airtight containers for up to 3 months. Note that barley absorbs liquid over time—add broth when reheating.
 - Slow cooker option: Brown the beef and sauté the aromatics first, then transfer everything to a slow cooker and cook on LOW for 6–7 hours or HIGH for 3–4 hours.
 - Intensity guide: This recipe rates Low-Moderate overall—mostly hands-off simmering with brief periods of active stirring.
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Nutrition Information (per serving, based on 8 servings)

Nutrient		Amount
Calories		~290 kcal
Total Fat		10 g
Saturated Fat		3.5 g
Cholesterol		40 mg
Sodium		780 mg
Total Carbohydrates		30 g
Dietary Fiber		5 g
Total Sugars		6 g
Protein		19 g
Vitamin A		45% DV
Vitamin C		15% DV
Iron		15% DV
Calcium		6% DV