Barley

Ingredient of the Month

Presented by ACF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University
**Barley** is a cereal grain with a nut-like flavor and a chewy, pasta-like consistency. Its appearance resembles wheat berries, although it is slightly lighter in color. This hearty grain dates back to the Stone Age and has been used throughout the world in a wide variety of dishes, from breads to soups. Most of the barley grown in the Western world is used either for animal feed or to produce malt for beer and whisky production. Nowadays, barley is being used more frequently as an ingredient to add healthful fiber, chewy texture and nutty flavor to soups, stews, casseroles, salads, pilafs and fillings.

**Healthy ingredient contribution**

- **FIBER:** As a great source of dietary fiber, barley contains soluble and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber is effective in lowering blood cholesterol and can reduce the risk of heart disease. Insoluble fiber may be beneficial in helping to maintain regular bowel functions and may help lower the risk of certain cancers such as colon cancer.
- **VITAMINS AND MINERALS:** Barley contains several vitamins and minerals including niacin (vitamin B3), thiamine (vitamin B1), selenium, iron, magnesium, zinc, phosphorus and copper.
- **ANTIOXIDANTS:** Barley contains antioxidants, which work to slow down the rate of oxidative damage by gathering up free radicals that form when body cells use oxygen.
- **PHYTOCHEMICALS:** Barley contains phytochemicals, which are natural plant-based chemicals that may decrease the risk for certain diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer.
- **FATS AND CARBOHYDRATES:** Like most plant foods, barley is naturally cholesterol-free and low in fat.

**Varieties and uses**

- **Whole grain barley**, also called hulled or hulless barley, has only the outer husk removed and is the most nutritious form of the grain. While this makes for a more chewy texture and requires a longer cooking time than other varieties, it also makes for a more robust flavor. To cook hulled barley, bring one part barley and three parts liquid to a boil; cover and reduce to a simmer for about 50-55 minutes.
- **Pearl barley** has had the bran removed and has been steamed and polished. It comes in three sizes — coarse, medium and fine — and can be used as an ingredient in soups, stews, casseroles and salads. While pearl barley is much more tender and quicker to cook than the whole grain variety, it is also slightly lower in nutrients. To cook pearl barley, bring one part barley and three parts liquid to a boil; cover and reduce to a simmer for about 45 minutes.
- **Scotch barley** is husked and coarsely ground, and falls somewhere in between whole grain and pearl barley nutritionally speaking.
- **Barley grits** are hulled barley grains that have been cracked into small pieces. They can be made from whole grain or pearl barley and, therefore, may have varying nutrient contents.
- **Barley flour** or **barley meal** is ground from pearl barley or whole grain and must be combined with gluten-containing flour to promote adequate rising in yeast breads. As a rule of thumb, barley flour may be substituted for about ¼ of the total flour used in yeast breads.
- **Barley flakes** or **quick-cooking barley** are made from whole grain or pearl barley kernels that have been steam-rolled and dried. Similar to rolled oats, they can be used in baked goods such as breads, muffins and cookies.

**Substitutions**

Barley may be cooked and served as a side dish similar to rice or couscous.

**Serving size**

½ cup of cooked pearl barley contains 3 grams of dietary fiber, less than 0.5 gram of fat and only 100 calories.

**Storage**

- **Raw/uncooked barley** (pearl barley, whole grain barley kernels, barley flour, barley flakes, barley grits) should be stored in an airtight container in a cool place, preferably in the refrigerator or freezer. If refrigerated or frozen in an airtight container, raw/uncooked barley may be stored for about six months.
- **Cooked barley** (pearl or whole grain kernels) may be stored for a short time prior to using. Place cooked pearl or whole grain barley kernels in an airtight container and refrigerate or freeze for up to a week. For best results, bring refrigerated or frozen barley to room temperature before using.
Method:
In heavy medium saucepan, bring chicken broth to a boil. Remove from heat, cover; set aside. Heat oil in heavy, wide pan over medium heat. Add scallions, mushrooms and garlic; cook, stirring occasionally until tender, about 3-4 minutes. Add barley and thyme, stirring for 1 minute. Add wine; stir until evaporated, about 1 minute. Add about ½ cup of hot broth; cook, stirring frequently until most of liquid has been absorbed. Continue cooking, adding enough broth, ½ cup at a time, and stirring frequently until barley is just tender and mixture has a slightly saucy consistency, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in cheese. Season with salt and pepper; serve.

Nutrition Information

Calories: 160  Fiber: 3g  Calcium: 10%
Fat: 5g  Protein: 9g  Iron: 8%
Saturated Fat: 1.5g  Vitamin A: 4%
Carbs: 20g  Vitamin C: 6%

This recipe was tested by Clemson University’s Culinary Nutrition Undergraduate Student Research Group.