



Swiss Barley Soup (Gerstensuppe)

I always cook up a big pot of this delicious barley soup for Swiss National Day (1 August). It's one of my husband, Franz's, favourite childhood memories - a sustaining dish full of vegetables and cured meat, that's more a meal than a soup, and perfect for this time of year. This version, called Bündner Gerstensuppe, is from the canton of Grisons (also called Graubünden) in Switzerland's far east, a remote mountainous area bordering Italy and Austria. I adapted the recipe from one in *Bündner Landfrauen Kochen* (Grisons Country Housewives Recipes), part of a series of books on traditional regional Swiss recipes - a bit like Australia's CWA Cookbooks. Raw speck (cured pork belly), schweinenacken (smoked pork, similar to German kassler) and smoked beef are available from specialist European butchers such as Walma's Meat & Smallgoods in Melbourne www.walmas.com.au, which are happy to mail order in Australia if you call or email. As it's almost impossible to get Swiss wine in Australia, with this soup we drank the deliciously elegant Patrizi Nebbiolo d'Alba from Piedmont, just across the Swiss-Italian border.

Serves 8 as a substantial entrée

METHOD

1. Soak barley overnight in cold water in the fridge.
2. Melt butter over a low heat, add onion and a good pinch of salt and cook, covered, without colouring for a few minutes.
3. Stir in leek, cover and cook for a further 5 minutes or so, until it just begins to colour.
4. Stir in carrots and celeriac, salt generously, cover and cook for 5 minutes, then add cabbage, cover and cook for a further 10 minutes or so, until carrot starts to soften.
5. Stir in speck, schweinenacken and beef.
6. Add water, bring to the boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for an hour.
7. Drain barley, rinse well and add to the soup. Continue cooking for 40 minutes.
8. Add potato, taste and add salt and pepper. Cook for a further 30 minutes or so, until potato is tender.
9. Serve, or cool and refrigerate to be reheated and served later. It only gets better!

INGREDIENTS

- 100g pearl barley
- 50g butter
- 200g brown onion, finely diced
- Salt flakes and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- 1 leek, white part only, washed and finely diced
- 450g carrots, peeled and finely diced
- 500g celeriac, peeled and finely diced
- ¼ Chinese cabbage, finely sliced
- 1 x 150g piece raw speck, finely diced
- 1 x 150g piece schweinenacken, finely diced
- 1 x 100g piece smoked beef, finely diced
- 1.5 litres water
- 450g potatoes, peeled and finely diced