

# A Sutherland Belle

## Soup-e Jo (Persian Chicken & Barley Soup)

In Persian kitchens, Soup-e Jo is as familiar and beloved as chicken noodle is in the South. Every household has its way — sometimes light with milk, sometimes rich with cream, sometimes with vegetables diced fine and other times almost stewed down to silk. What always remains is barley, chicken, and the balance of brightness and warmth: lemon to lift, ginger to soothe, turmeric to color it gold.

This is a soup of patience — the barley swelling slowly, the chicken simmering until tender — but it rewards you with a broth that feels both nourishing and elegant. It's hearty enough to carry a meal, yet gentle enough to be comfort food when you need something healing.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup pearly barley, soaked for at least an hour or overnight, changing water as needed
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 large onion, finely diced (about 2 cups)
- 3 celery stalks, finely diced
- 1 large (or 2 medium) carrots, grated
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced (plus more to taste)
- 1 ½ tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 7 cups chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon Better Than Bouillon Roasted Chicken Base (optional but recommended if using store-bought stock)
- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 bay leaves
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- ½ cup heavy whipping cream
- Fresh cilantro or parsley, for garnish

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### *For Stovetop*

1. Soak the barley for at least an hour or overnight, changing the water as needed. Rinse and drain.

2. Heat the olive oil and butter in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrots, and celery, and sauté for 5 minutes, until the vegetables soften.
3. Add the garlic, ginger, and tomato paste. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.
4. Add the salt, pepper, turmeric, barley, stock, chicken breasts, and bay leaves. Stir in the Better Than Bouillon and bring to a boil. Partially cover with a lid, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through. Carefully remove the chicken, shred with two forks, and set aside.
5. Continue simmering the soup until the barley is tender, about 30 minutes more. Remove and discard bay leaves.
6. Remove from heat and stir in the shredded chicken, heavy whipping cream, lemon zest, and juice. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Garnish with cilantro or parsley and fresh cracked black pepper. Serve immediately.

### ***For Crockpot***

1. Place the soaked, rinsed barley, onion, celery, carrots, garlic, ginger, tomato paste, salt, pepper, turmeric, chicken stock, chicken breasts, bay leaves, and Better Than Bouillon into the crockpot.
2. Cover and cook on Low for 6–7 hours or High for 3–4 hours, until the chicken and barley are tender.
3. Remove the chicken, shred, and return to the pot.
4. Stir in the cream, lemon zest, and juice. Taste and adjust seasoning. Garnish and serve.

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### **Serving & Storage**

- Serve with warm flatbread, a green salad, or pickled vegetables on the side.
- Soup-e Jo thickens as it sits; add a splash of stock or water when reheating.
- Keeps refrigerated up to 4 days. Flavors deepen overnight.