

Pearl barley has the lowest GI value of the 'true' grains (excluding the pseudo grains), just 25. It's high soluble fibre helps slow down the absorption of sugar, lowering the overall GI value of a meal.

Poached chicken, barley, mint, zucchini & pine nut salad

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 45 minutes

Serves: 4

220g (1 cup) pearl barley
1 litre (4 cups) water
1 brown onion, halved
6 black peppercorns
1 teaspoon sea salt
500g chicken breast fillets
2 large zucchini, trimmed
4 yellow squash, halved
½ cup freshly picked mint leaves
2 tablespoons snipped chives
⅓ cup pine nuts, lightly toasted
2 tablespoons currants

Dressing

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon raspberry vinegar
2 tablespoons apple juice

1 Cook the barley in a saucepan of boiling water for 30 minutes or until al dente. Refresh under cold running water, then drain well and transfer to a large mixing bowl.

2 Meanwhile, put the onion, peppercorns and salt into a large saucepan with 1 litre (4 cups) water and bring to the boil over high heat. Add the chicken, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer gently for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and leave the chicken in the poaching liquid, covered, for 30 minutes. Remove the chicken and discard the liquid. Set aside to cool, then shred.

3 Using a peeler or mandoline, cut the zucchini and squash into thin ribbons. Place in a heatproof bowl, cover with boiling water and set aside for 1 minute. Refresh under cold running water, then drain well.

4 Add the shredded chicken, zucchini, squash, herbs, pine nuts and currants to the bowl with the barley and stir to combine.

5 To make the dressing, put all ingredients in a small bowl and whisk to combine. Add to the salad and gently toss to combine, season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

Tip: zucchini and squash do not need much cooking, and are also delicious raw in fact. Blanching them in boiling water maintains their texture so they give flavour and a slight crunch to salads.

Tags: wheat free, dairy free, lower GI