

A FIELD NOTE FROM SOUP REMEMBERS

*The broth Egyptian physicians
prescribed
4,000 years ago.*

A short history, and the recipe it left behind.



Barley, onion, and the first medicine.

Around 2000 BCE, Egyptian physicians prescribed simmered vegetable broths for the unwell. The instructions survive among the earliest written dietary records in existence, recorded on papyrus long before "diet" and "medicine" were treated as separate ideas.

Barley, onion, and garlic were boiled together and given to a tired or recovering body. Not a delicacy. Not a ritual reserved for the wealthy. A plain, simmered bowl, understood at the time as both food and remedy.

FIELD NOTE

Barley is among the oldest cultivated grains on record, simmered into restorative broths across several ancient civilizations, entirely independent of one another.

Nourishment, understood as the first medicine.

THE RECIPE

Onion & Barley Broth, Modernized

A simple update on the broth once prescribed as medicine, built for a modern kitchen and a quiet evening.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 yellow onions, sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- ¾ cup pearl barley, rinsed
- 6 cups vegetable or bone broth
- 1 tsp sea salt, more to taste
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 small bunch parsley, chopped
- 1 lemon, halved

METHOD

- 1 Warm the olive oil in a heavy pot over medium heat. Add the onions and cook slowly, stirring occasionally, until soft and just turning golden, about 15 minutes.
- 2 Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more, until fragrant.
- 3 Stir in the barley, then pour in the broth. Bring to a simmer.
- 4 Partially cover and simmer 35–40 minutes, until the barley is tender and the broth has taken on the onion's sweetness.
- 5 Season with salt and pepper. Stir in most of the parsley, saving a little for serving.
- 6 Ladle into bowls. Finish each with a squeeze of lemon and the remaining parsley.

FIELD NOTE

This version keeps the three original ingredients at the center: barley, onion, and garlic. Everything else here is a modern addition. It also calls for pearl barley rather than hulled barley, which sits closer to what would have actually been available in ancient Egypt, traded here for a shorter cook time.



Soup cleansing is not a diet. It is an ancient habit that healthy people once kept on purpose, in unrelated corners of the world, long before it had a name.

SOUP REMEMBERS

Rediscovering an Ancient Practice of Nourishment. Available on Amazon.

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