Vegetarian Bean and Barley Soup

Prep Time: 10 minutes  
Cook Time: 1 hour  
Total Time: 1 hour, 10 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1/2 onion, diced
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- Any other vegetables desired, 1/2 cup each
- 2 Tbsp. oil or margarine
- 8 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1 cup whole barley, uncooked
- 1 cup kidney beans, pre-soaked if dry (or pinto)
- 1/3 cup tomato paste or crushed tomatoes
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 tsp. celery salt (optional)
- 1/2 tsp. basil
- 1/2 tsp. oregano or Italian spice mix
- 1/2 tsp. thyme
- 1 tsp. onion powder (optional)
- 2 large bay leaves

Preparation:

In a large soup pot, sauté the onions, celery, carrots and any other vegetables for 3-5 minutes. Add vegetable broth or water and all other ingredients and bring to a simmer, then reduce heat to medium low. Allow to simmer for at least an hour, stirring occasionally, until barley is soft and somewhat fluffy. Add more spices to taste and enjoy!