

**Crema di Fagioli e Orzo**  
(cannellini bean puree with barley)

Serves 12

6 cups dried cannelloni beans (about 39 oz)  
3 (1/2-in thick) slices onion  
¼ lb cooked ham, chopped  
15 cups (9 cans) chicken broth  
Coarse sea salt  
¾ cup pearly barley  
7 ½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
Freshly ground black pepper  
3 garlic cloves, gently smashed and diced  
¾ cup of finely chopped mixed herbs, such as cilantro, sage, chives, basil or marjoram

Place beans in large bowl. Cover with cold water by 3 inches and let soak overnight.

Drain beans. Place in pot. Add 15 cups chicken broth, ham and onion. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and gently simmer, stirring occasionally, until beans are very tender, adding water as necessary to keep beans covered by about ½ inch, 50 min. to 1 ½ hrs.

Meanwhile, bring a medium pot of salted water (at least 9 cups) to a boil; add barley, reduce heat to med-low and gently simmer, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 45 min. Drain.

When beans are tender, transfer with liquid, ham, and onion to a blender; carefully puree in batches until smooth. Return to pot. Whisk in 1/4 cup of oil and heat gently to warm through; season generously with salt and pepper to taste. Add water to thin soup to your liking, if desired.

In a large nonstick skillet, heat remaining oil over medium-high heat. Add barley and garlic; cook, stirring frequently for 2 minutes. Stir in herbs and cook 1 minute more. Season barley with salt and pepper.

Ladle soup into bowls; spoon barley on top.