Mediterranean Barley Timbales

Parve  Yields 10-12 servings

*Grains such as barley work very well as molded side dishes, as in this timbale. It allows for pretty presentation as well as portion control. You can use ring molds, aluminum muffin tins, ceramic ramekins, or silicone molds for endless sizes and shapes of timbales. If there is not a lot of oil in the recipe, just spray the mold with nonstick cooking spray for easy release.*

1½ cups pearled barley

 ½ teaspoon dried oregano

 ¼ teaspoon dried basil

 water

 1 English hothouse cucumber with skin

 1 cup grape tomatoes, sliced into ¼-inch rounds

 ¾ cup kalamata olives, pitted, chopped

 ¾ cup marinated artichoke hearts, rinsed, roughly chopped

 6 mint leaves, chopped

 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

 1 tablespoon rice vinegar

 ½ teaspoon fine sea salt

 ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

 nonstick cooking spray

 large basil leaves

1. Heat an empty large (12-14-inch) skillet over medium-high heat. Add the barley and toast until you begin to smell it, 6-7 minutes. Shake the barley every few minutes. Add oregano and dried basil. Add water to cover the barley by ½-inch; the amount will vary depending on the size of your skillet. Simmer, uncovered, for 20-30 minutes, or until soft. Add water a tablespoon at a time if it has cooked out.
2. Slice the cucumber in half lengthwise, remove and discard seeds, cut each half into 3 long strips, and then into ¼-inch dice. Place into a large bowl.
3. Add the tomatoes, olives, artichokes, mint, olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Add the barley and mix well.
4. Spray a 4-ounce ramekin with nonstick cooking spray. Pack the ramekin with the barley mixture. Lay a basil leaf on top of the barley and invert the timbale onto a plate or platter, with the basil serving as a base. Repeat with remaining barley. Can be served hot or at room temperature.