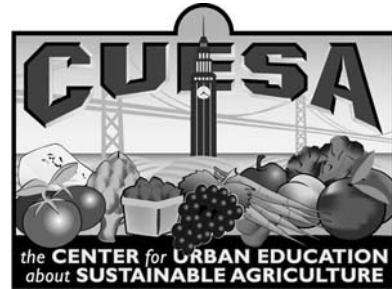


Real Meals Real Fast

By Jessica Prentice

Cream of Butternut Squash Soup

This is one of my favorite fall standards. The primary recipe is for an herby, European-style squash soup. Then I offer an Asian-style variation.



Ingredients:

2 tblspns butter or olive oil

2-3 leeks, sliced into rounds

1 butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into chunks

1 bouquet garni (an herb bundle tied with string) including any or all of the following:

a bay leaf, a sprig of thyme, a sprig of sage, a sprig of parsley, a rosemary stem

Filtered water (or chicken stock)

1 cup yogurt, buttermilk, half-and-half, or whole milk (or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cream or crème fraiche)

Salt and pepper to taste

Garnish:

Crème fraiche or yogurt

Finely minced rosemary, thyme, sage, or parsley leaves (or a combination of these herbs); or a grating of nutmeg, or a grind of black pepper

Procedure:

1. Heat the butter or oil in a medium-sized soup pot. Add the leeks and sauté until soft.
2. Add the butternut squash and add filtered water (or stock) to cover the vegetables by about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. Add the bouquet garni and bring the pot to a boil.
3. Reduce heat and simmer until the squash is soft.
4. Turn off the heat, remove the bouquet garni.
5. Puree the soup with an immersion blender (or in a blender), adding the yogurt or other dairy, and a big pinch of salt and pepper as you blend. Taste the soup and adjust the seasonings.
6. Serve in a shallow bowl with a dollop of crème fraiche (or yogurt) and a sprinkling of herbs, nutmeg, or pepper.

Variation: Butternut Soup with Coconut Milk and Ginger

- Replace butter or olive oil with ghee, if you have it
- Replace bouquet garni with 3-4 slices fresh gingerroot
- Add a tblspn or so fish sauce to the soup while it's cooking (reduce the salt)
- Replace the yogurt (or other dairy) in the puree with coconut milk (you can use the whole can)
- Garnish with a dollop of yogurt and a sprinkling of minced scallions

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