

Melissa's Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

I love this creamy, sweet, and satisfying soup served with a side salad.

- 1 large butternut squash, roasted (this can be done day before; see below)
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large shallot, finely diced
- ½ sweet onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 5 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 teaspoon cumin powder
- 1 large garnet yam, peeled and cubed
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 can (15 ounces) coconut milk
- Dash of cinnamon and/or nutmeg or garam masala (Indian spice blend)
- Dash of cloves
- Sea salt and ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup (optional)
- Pumpkin seeds, toasted pecans or walnuts, fresh herbs, or sliced pears

To prepare the squash: Heat the oven to 350°F. Cut the squash in half lengthwise. Line a baking dish or cookie sheet with parchment paper and coat it with cooking spray. Place the squash cut side down on the parchment and poke holes in the squash with a sharp knife or fork, then spray the squash with cooking spray. Bake for about 45 minutes, or until the squash can be easily pierced with a fork. Take it out of the oven and let it cool.

To prepare the soup: In a large pot over medium heat, heat the oil. Add the shallot, onion, and celery and sauté for about 5 minutes, or until they're soft and translucent. Add the carrots and cook for about 3 minutes longer. Add the cumin and stir to release the flavor. Add the yam and broth. Cover the pot and bring the soup to a boil. Turn down the heat and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, remove and discard the seeds from the squash. Scoop out the flesh and put it into a bowl. Discard the skin. Add the squash to the pot and cook for a couple of minutes. Add the coconut milk and stir well to combine. Reduce the heat to low, and do not bring the soup to a boil once you add the coconut milk, as the milk will curdle.

In batches, ladle the mixture into a blender and puree until very smooth, or use a hand blender. Pour the pureed soup back into the pot. Add the cinnamon, nutmeg, or garam masala. Add the cloves, salt and pepper to taste, and syrup (if using). The soup will be very thick. If you want a thinner soup, add a little water.

To serve, top the soup with pumpkin seeds, toasted pecans or walnuts, fresh herbs, or sliced pears.

Makes 6 to 8 servings