

Sarah's Roasted Butternut Squash and Bacon Soup

Makes: about 2.5 to 3 quarts

Ingredients:

1 butternut squash, ends trimmed, halved lengthwise and seeded
1 tablespoon olive or vegetable oil
Kosher salt
Black pepper
4 slices bacon, diced
1 medium yellow or sweet onion, large-diced
5 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
1 quart chicken or vegetable stock
1 quart water
3 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
Pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)



Directions:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly coat the inside of each butternut half with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place the halves on the baking sheet, with the cut side down.

Roast in the center of the oven until the flesh is quite tender and caramelized, about 50 to 60 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool for 15 minutes. Once cool, peel and discard the skin from each half. Chop the squash into large pieces and set aside.

Meanwhile, in a stock pot or Dutch oven, cook the diced bacon over medium heat, stirring often, until it is browned and crispy. Use a slotted spoon to remove the bacon bits from the pan and place them on a plate lined with paper towel to cool and drain the excess grease.

Use the remaining bacon grease in the pot to sauté the onions over medium-low heat, stirring often. After 4 minutes, add the garlic and continue to cook over medium-low heat for 2 minutes, stirring often.

Stir in the roasted butternut squash and cook for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the remaining ingredients, plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt and ½ teaspoon black pepper. Bring to a boil over high heat, then simmer over low heat for 45 minutes.

Puree the soup with a liquid or immersion blender, working in batches as needed as the soup will be hot. Blend the soup until it is free of any lumps. The soup should be smooth and velvety – if it appears too thick, add a few tablespoons of water when blending to thin it out.

Bring the pureed soup back to the pot and cook over medium heat until hot. Serve immediately. The soup may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or in the freezer for several months.

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