

Butternut Squash Soup

(Cook's Illustrated)



Ingredients:

2 tbsp sweet Butter
2 large Shallots, minced
6 lbs Butternut Squash
12 cups Water
Salt
1 cup Heavy Cream
2 tsp dark brown Sugar
Generous pinch ground Nutmeg
(Buttered Cinnamon-Sugar Croutons for serving – recipe follows)

Method:

Melt butter in a Dutch oven over medium-low heat.
Add shallots and cook, stirring frequently, until translucent – about 3 minutes.
Cut the squash in half lengthwise, each half cut in half crosswise; seeds and fibers scraped out.
Add the seeds and fibers to the Dutch oven and cook, stirring occasionally until it all turns a saffron color – about 4 minutes.
Add water and 1 tsp salt to pot and bring to a boil over high heat.
Reduce heat to medium-low, place squash cut side down, in steamer basket and lower basket into pot.
Cover and steam until squash is completely tender – about 30 minutes.
Take pot off heat and use tongs to transfer squash to a rimmed baking sheet.
When cool enough to handle, use a large spoon to scrape the flesh from the skins.
Reserve squash flesh in a bowl and discard the skins.
Strain the steaming liquid through a fine mesh strainer into a second bowl; discard the solids in the strainer. (You should have 5 to 6 cups of liquid.)
Rinse and dry the pot.
Working in batches and filling blender container only halfway for each batch, puree squash, adding enough reserved steaming liquid to obtain a smooth consistency.
Transfer puree back to clean Dutch oven; stir in remaining steaming liquid, cream and brown sugar.
Warm the soup over medium-low heat until hot – about 3 minutes.
Stir in nutmeg, season with salt to taste, and serve with croutons. (Recipe follows)

Buttered Cinnamon-Sugar Croutons

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Ingredients:

4 slices hearty white Sandwich Bread, crusts removed, cut into ½" cubes, (roughly 2 cups)
2 tbsp sweet Butter, melted
2 tbsp Sugar
1 tsp ground Cinnamon

Method:

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350°.
Combine bread cubes and melted butter in a medium bowl and toss to coat.
Combine sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl, then add to the bread cubes and toss again to coat.
Spread the bread cubes in a single layer on parchment paper-lined rimmed baking sheet and bake, stirring occasionally, until crisp – about 8-10 minutes.
Let cool on baking sheet to room temperature.