

Butternut Squash Soup

This month's recipe is from Polly Latow, Clinical Curriculum Manager, Office of Medical Education, UC Davis, School of Medicine. Polly reminds us how cooking a meal together builds community. "Cooking a meal with friends and family is a wonderful way to connect and show your care for them. It's not important how fancy the meal is or whether your house is clean or how together you are; all that's needed is a warm welcome and food prepared with thought for those you are feeding. One of my favorite meals to share with friends is a salad, bread that can be dipped in olive oil and a soup made the night before. Here is one my favorite soup recipe that is great for a crowd."

Ingredients:

- 1 butternut squash
- Olive oil
- 1-2 onions peeled and thinly sliced
- Salt
- Thyme – several fresh sprigs best but a teaspoon of dried ok too
- Butter (oil if vegan)
- ¼ cup cognac (optional)
- 4-6 cups chicken stock (vegetable or even water for vegetarian)
- Dash of cayenne, curry, cinnamon or any spices that sound good
- Salt and pepper



Instructions:

- Peel butternut squash (I use a carrot peeler), remove seeds and chop into large 2-3 inch pieces. Alternatively you can buy squash that's already cut up
- Mix with some olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper
- Spread out on a baking sheet and roast in a 375 degree oven until pretty soft. (Or you can crank the oven up to 425 if you are in a hurry) I'd say it may take 45 minutes
- Meanwhile, melt 2-3 tablespoons of butter in a large pot and add onion, sprinkle with salt, pepper and thyme. Cook slowly so that it gets soft and barely changes color this may take most of the time that the squash is cooking. When the onions are very soft, turn up heat, pour in cognac and cook a few minutes until the alcohol cooks off.
- Add the squash and stock or water to the onions until it covers the squash by an inch or so.
- Cook until the squash is very soft, then use an immersion blender or put it into a blender or Vitamix to blend.
- Adjust seasoning – I like to add a bit of curry, cinnamon and cayenne and more fresh thyme.
- Can be made ahead, refrigerated and reheated.

You can garnish with a dollop of crème fraiche and fried shallots when you serve it, or it's fun to put out garnishes and let your guests add their own.

Ideas for garnishes:

- Croutons
- Sour cream or plain Greek yoghurt
- Pumpkin seeds
- Candied cranberries
- Chopped apple