

Apple and Winter Vegetable Soup

Chefs Tim Ma and Ben Lin say: If you are starting with a whole winter squash, be sure to save the seeds for a snack or soup garnish. Remove any fibrous bits and dry the seeds thoroughly. Toss with a little oil, salt and pepper, then bake on a sheet pan at 350 degrees F for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring once or twice, until crisped. Cool completely.

The pureed soup can be refrigerated for up to 3 days, or frozen for up to 3 months.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 16 cups (8 to 12 servings)

3 pounds butternut squash or other winter squash (see NOTE)
1/4 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 cup chopped onion
1 cup chopped celery
1 cup peeled, chopped carrots
1 cup peeled, cored, chopped apple
6 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
1 cup low-fat sour cream
2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 1/2 to 2 teaspoons salt, or more as needed
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more as needed

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the squash into big chunks, discarding any seeds and fiber. Spread on a sheet pan and roast at 350 degrees F until tender, about 40 to 50 minutes. Scoop out the flesh and discard the skins. Let cool.
2. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat until it shimmers. Stir in the onion, celery, carrots, apple, and roasted squash. Cook until the onion is translucent, stirring a few times.
3. Add the broth, increase the heat to medium-high and bring just to a boil. Then reduce the heat to medium-low (barely bubbling) and cook for 25 to 30 minutes, or until all the vegetables are tender. Remove from the heat to cool for a bit.
4. Use an immersion blender to puree the soup (in the pot) or a jar blender, in batches, until smooth. Return the pureed soup to the pot, if needed.
5. Stir in the sour cream, maple syrup, salt and pepper. Taste, and adjust the seasoning as needed. Warm the soup over medium heat just before serving.

NOTE: The skin/peel of some winter squashes is edible when roasted, such as acorn, kabocha, and red kuri. But to keep the color of this soup vibrant, use only the roasted flesh.



If you plan to freeze the soup, store it in 1- or 2-cup containers for easy defrosting and serving.

MEAL KIT TIPS

DID YOU KNOW?



Whole, unblemished butternut squash can keep at room temperature for up to 1 month, or in a cool, dry place (50 to 55 degrees F) for 2 or 3 months.



It takes about 100 days for butternut squash to ripen! It typically is cured at a warm temperature for another 10 to 12 days, to develop maximum flavor.



For easier peeling, microwave your trimmed butternut squash for 3 to 4 minutes, until the skin has softened.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU MAKE WITH THE INGREDIENTS IN THIS MEAL KIT?

Make roasted squash rounds!

Cut the middle, unseeded section of your peeled **butternut squash** (see DID YOU KNOW, above) crosswise into 3/4-inch thick rounds. Brush them with oil on both sides then season with **salt and pepper**. Roast at 400 degrees F on a lined sheet pan for 15 minutes, then turn each one over and roast on the second side for 10 minutes, or until tender. Meanwhile, toss some **chopped apple** with **maple syrup**, then spread equal amounts of that mixture atop each roasted squash round. Broil for a few minutes, watching closely, until lightly browned but not burnt. Serve warm.

Make quick curried vegetables!

Heat some oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Stir in **chopped onion**, **chopped celery**, **chopped carrots** and **chopped apple**. Cook until slightly softened, stirring and seasoning with **salt**, **pepper** and some curry powder until evenly coated. Add enough **low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth** to barely cover the vegetable mixture. Cook until tender then remove from the heat. Stir in just enough **sour cream** to make a creamy sauce. Taste and season as needed. Serve as is, or over cooked rice.

Make squash & apple hash!

Cut the middle, unseeded section of your peeled **butternut squash** (see DID YOU KNOW, above) into 1/2-inch cubes. Toss them on a rimmed sheet pan with a little **oil**, **salt** and **pepper**. Roast at 375 degrees F for about 30 minutes, until barely tender and slightly crisped on some edges. Meanwhile, cook some **chopped onion** in a large skillet over medium heat, until softened and lightly golden. Stir in the just-roasted squash cubes, some **chopped apples** and a generous drizzle of **maple syrup**. Increase the heat and stir the pan's ingredients. Cook for several minutes, until sizzling and evenly coated. Taste and season as needed.