

THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES



Butternut Squash Soup with Spiced Creme Fraiche (slightly adapted from Allison Vines-Rushing and Slade Rushing's *Southern Comfort* via epicurious)

The original recipe calls for the big spices to be tied up in a cheesecloth bundle before being added to the soup. I'm sure they're easier to remove before blending this way, but fishing out a few spices from a pot of soup seemed easier to me than digging out the cheesecloth from the pantry.

1 large butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cubed
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and pepper
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
4 large shallots, sliced
8 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed
½ teaspoon ground white pepper
1 bay leaf
1 thyme sprig
1 star anise
4 whole peppercorns
½ cup white wine
8 cups chicken or vegetable broth
½ cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
Spiced Crème Fraîche, for accompaniment

1. Place a rimmed baking sheet in the oven; heat the oven to 425 degrees. When it's hot, remove the pan from the oven and spread the olive oil evenly over the surface. Transfer the squash and a generous sprinkling of salt and pepper to the hot baking sheet; stir to coat. Roast the squash until browned on at least one side, about 25 minutes, stirring once.

2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook, stirring occasionally, until the edges start to brown, 6-8 minutes. Add the garlic, pepper, bay, thyme, star anise, and peppercorns; cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the wine and cook, scraping the bottom of the pot, until reduced by half. Add the roasted squash, broth, cream, sugar, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Increase the heat to medium-high and bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to medium-low; cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

3. Remove and discard the bay, thyme, star anise, and peppercorns. Puree the soup, either with an immersion blender or by transferring it in batches to a standup blender. Taste for seasoning and serve immediately, topped with Spiced Crème Fraîche. (Soup can be chilled for several days and reheated.)

Spiced Crème Fraîche

I actually don't know how much of a difference the spices make, but I did like the tart dairy with the soup. Greek yogurt, sour creme, and crème fraîche will all work just fine.

- 1 cup crème fraîche
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger

Mix all ingredients.