

Gingered Butternut Squash Soup with Spicy Pecan Cream

Dean Fearing recipe, via *Food & Wine* (2007), and from Tarla Fallgatter (cooking instructor) who made slight changes to the original.



- 2 3/4 pounds butternut squash, halved lengthwise and seeded
- 1/2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup pecans (rounded - about 1 ounce)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1/2 large onion, cut into 1/2-inch dice
- 1/2 small fennel bulb, cored and cut into 1/2-inch dice
- One 3/4-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely diced (or more if you like the heat)
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup heavy cream, or light coconut milk
- Kosher salt to taste
- CREAM TOPPING:
- 1/3 cup heavy cream, chilled
- 1 dash cayenne pepper
- A light drizzle of hazelnut oil on each serving (optional)

Servings: 6

Note: when I made this I used more fennel (because I like fennel) but it will provide a stronger flavor. If you roast the whole squash, it will have a dark golden color. Baking the cubes won't do that unless you roast it until it acquires that golden hue. That will also change the color of the soup. Adding more fennel lightens the color of the soup. The fennel is barely discernible in the taste profile if you use just 1/2 of a small fennel bulb. The ginger provides just a little hint of spicy heat.

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Rub the cut sides of the squash with the olive oil and set them, cut side down, on a large rimmed baking sheet. Bake the squash for about 1 hour, or until very tender. Remove from the oven and let stand until cool enough to handle. Spoon the squash flesh into a large bowl; discard the skins. If baking already peeled and cubed squash, bake about 30-40 minutes until tender.
2. In a pie plate, toast the pecans for about 8 minutes, or until lightly browned and fragrant; let the nuts cool.
3. In a large pot, melt the butter. Add the onion, fennel and ginger and cook over moderate heat until softened, about 8 minutes. Add the squash and the chicken stock, cover and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Uncover the pot and continue cooking until the squash starts to fall apart, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the coconut milk.
4. Meanwhile, in a food processor, pulse the pecans until they are finely chopped. In a medium bowl, beat the cream until soft peaks form. Fold in the chopped pecans, hazelnut oil and cayenne pepper and season with salt.
5. Working in batches, puree the squash soup in a blender until smooth. Season with salt. Ladle the soup into bowls, top with a dollop of the pecan cream. Drizzle with hazelnut oil if desired and serve.
6. Make Ahead: The soup can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Reheat gently, adding a little chicken stock to thin the soup. Or freeze (without the topping) for longer storage. The original recipe included adding a little bit of lemon juice at the very end.

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 339 Calories; 26g Fat (66.5% calories from fat); 4g Protein; 25g Carbohydrate; 4g Dietary Fiber; 78mg Cholesterol; 1111mg Sodium. Exchanges: 1 1/2 Grain(Starch); 0 Lean Meat; 0 Vegetable; 0 Non-Fat Milk; 5 Fat.

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