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The Juniper Spoon's Roasted Butternut Squash and Apple Soup

Lali Hess, owner of The Juniper Spoon (www.juniperspoon.com) prides herself in using only the freshest Indiana locally grown and produced food in her catering business and dinner delivery service. This soup features Indiana butternut squashes, apples, and maple syrup. It's comfort food at its finest and so easy to make.

Two large (1 ½ to 2 pounds each) butternut squashes, cut in half lengthwise
4 tablespoons of butter
two medium onions, chopped into ½ dice
1 shallot, diced finely
2 cloves of garlic, minced finely
10-15 fresh sage leaves, minced finely
4 large apples (prefer MacIntosh or a soft cooking apple), cored and chopped (do not peel)
2 cups vegetable or chicken broth, water, or apple cider
Maple syrup to taste
Salt to taste

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line a sheet pan with non-stick foil and place the cut squash, cut side down on the foil. Roast the squash until very soft—begin checking them around 45 minutes.

Remove the squash from the oven and let cool until you can pick them up (about 15 minutes) and scoop out the seeds with a large spoon. Discard the seeds. Scoop the squash flesh out of the shell and place it in a bowl.

In a large stock pot with a heavy bottom, melt the butter over medium heat and add the onions, shallot, garlic, and sage. Cook, stirring to prevent burning, for 5 minutes.

Add the diced apples and cook for another 15 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent burning, or until the apples are softened. Add the butternut flesh and liquid. Bring the soup to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes.

Remove the pot from the heat and use an immersion blender to puree the soup. Add more liquid as necessary to achieve your desired consistency (I like it very thick.). Return to heat for a few minutes to heat through.

Taste for sweetness and add maple syrup to taste. Do the same with the salt.

Serve immediately. If you like, garnish with whole sage leaves sautéed in a bit of olive oil until crispy, roasted squash seeds, fried capers, or a drizzle of buttermilk.

Serves 8-10.

Note: This soup freezes and reheats well.

Victoria Wesseler