



Pumpkin Soup

This simple soup makes an excellent platform for countless improvisations and variations. I prefer to use one of the tastier pumpkin varieties such as a “crown prince”, butternut or kabocha squash. Makes 2 litres of soup

Ingredients:

1 kg, about 5 big handfuls, pumpkin or squash, peeled and chopped
1 handful chopped shallots or spring onions
2 cloves garlic (depending on your taste for garlic)
1 tbsp olive oil
1 litre light vegetable stock (I recommend marigold low salt stock powder)
Salt and pepper

Method:

1. Fry the shallots or spring onions in the olive oil until soft and starting to brown.
2. Add the pumpkin and vegetable stock and cook until the pumpkin is soft.
3. Puree the soup with a hand blender or mash with a potato masher.
4. Season to taste and serve

Variations:

- For an Asian twist, just before you serve, take out one cup of soup and blend together with a tablespoon of raw, grated ginger and one clove of chopped raw garlic. Return this to the soup, re-blend & season to taste. Serve with some shredded spring onions and a drop of soy sauce.
- You can also serve this soup with a spoon of miso paste (fermented soya) rather than soya sauce - miso adds extra rich flavour, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- For a Thai soup, fry a tablespoon of green curry paste and add it together with a cup of light coconut milk to the soup. Top this with a spoon of a pesto made from fresh coriander blended with cashew nuts and a squeeze of fresh lime.
- For an Indian twist, add a cup of red lentils to with the pumpkin and finish off with a Tarka or spiced oil – to do this, heat a tablespoon of oil or gee and add a teaspoon each of cumin, coriander and mustard seeds. Cook this until the seeds start to pop and then add chopped garlic and chilli which only need a moment in the pan. Add the hot oil and spices to the soup and top with lots of chopped coriander.

Top Tips:

- ✓ For a deep and bold flavour, dress the chopped pumpkin with oil and a seasoning and roast at 200°C for 15 minutes before making the soup.
- ✓ If you make this soup in bulk and want to freeze the excess, portion off as much as you want to store, cool, decant, date and freeze.



Roasted vegetable hummus

This is a quirky take on Hummus enriched with roasted vegetables. I like to make 3 separate batches with distinct characters and colours and then serve on one plate like a Rasta flag. Makes about 1kg of hummus.

Ingredients

2 x 400g tin of chickpeas, drained and rinsed

2 handfuls each of beetroot, butternut squash and red onion, washed or peeled and cut into chunks.

6 tbsp Tahini (sesame paste)

12 tbsp water

2 tbsp olive oil

2 cloves of chopped garlic, chopped

Juice of 3 lemons

1 tsp cumin

1 tsp smoked paprika

½ tsp chilli powder

1 tsp salt

Method

1. Prepare the vegetable for roasting. Heat the oven to 200c. Dress the vegetables separately in olive oil and place onto one or two baking sheets separated by foil. Roast for about 25 minutes or until soft and starting to char at the edges.
2. Blend the most of the chickpeas with the sesame paste, oil, garlic, salt and lemon juice, adding water a little at a time until you have a smooth basic hummus.
3. Separate this into 3 equal portions and blend the roast squash and paprika into one, the beetroot and cumin into the second and the onion and chilli into the third. Keep a few pieces of each roasted vegetable aside to garnish.
4. Serve in a style of your choice with the extra vegetables and chickpeas scattered over, dressed with more olive oil and a dusting of paprika.



Roast squash, walnut and blue cheese frittata

Roasting butternut squash brings out an intense flavour which works well with the salty kick from the blue cheese. If you don't like blue cheese, feta or a creamy goat cheese also works well. I tend to cook this in the oven, but it is also easy to prepare in a frying pan finished off under the grill. Serves 4

Ingredients

1kg butternut squash, halves, de-seeded & chopped into cubes
150g danish blue or stilton
50g walnut pieces
6 eggs
Olive oil
Salt and pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180c/ 330f
2. Prepare the squash and place in a baking dish dressed with a little oil, salt and pepper, roast for 25 minutes until soft and a little charred at the edges.
3. Beat and season the eggs then fold in squash and return to the roasting tray.
4. Place small chunks of cheese at regular intervals around the dish and bake for 15 minutes.
5. Remove from the oven and sprinkle over the walnuts – push these into the egg mixture and return to the oven for a further 5 - 10 minutes.
6. Serve hot or cold.

Variation as a tart:

Use the same filling for a delicious savoury tart – make up short crust pastry with 250g of plain flour, 100g butter, one egg and enough water to bind into a loose pastry. Rest this for half an hour in the fridge and roll out to line a 25cm tray or tart case. Prick with a fork, weight down with baking beans and bake this blind for 20 minutes at 180'c. Allow to cool and then fill with the squash, cheese and nuts. Beat 3 eggs and 75m double cream, season and pour over the filling. Bake for 35 minutes at 180'c.



Red cabbage, grapefruit and sesame salad

Red cabbage is best in the early winter after the first frost. This salad is sweet, colorful and crunchy which makes it very appealing to children. It is great for boosting the immune system as its rich in Vitamin C and calcium.

Ingredients

½ a medium size red cabbage
1 ruby grapefruit
1 orange or ½ cup orange juice
3 tbsp sesame seeds

Method:

1. Place the cabbage cut side down and shred into fine slivers using a sharp knife.
2. Place the sesame seeds onto a baking tray and grill for 2-3 minutes, or until browned.
3. Peel the grapefruit and break into segments, discarding all of the pith.
4. Mix the cabbage, grapefruit and half the sesame in a bowl.
5. Squeeze the orange on top as a dressing, and garnish with the remainder of the toasted seeds.

