



Silky Butternut Squash Soup

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 6: Cooking with Squash

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

In our butternut squash soup recipe, we got the most flavor out of our squash by sautéing shallots and butter with the reserved squash seeds and fibers, simmering the mixture in water, and then using the liquid to steam the unpeeled squash (thereby avoiding the difficult task of peeling raw squash). To complete our butternut squash soup recipe, we peeled the squash when cooled, then pureed it with the reserved steaming liquid for a perfectly smooth texture.

Makes 1 1/2 quarts, serving 4 to 6

If you don't own a folding steamer basket, a pasta pot with a removable pasta insert works well. Some nice garnishes for the soup are freshly grated nutmeg, a drizzle of balsamic vinegar, a sprinkle of paprika, or Buttered Cinnamon-Sugar Croutons (see related recipe).

INGREDIENTS

Silky Butternut Squash Soup

- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 2 medium shallots, minced (about 4 tablespoons)
- 3 pounds butternut squash (about 1 large), unpeeled, squash halved lengthwise, seeds and stringy fibers scraped with spoon and reserved (about 1/4 cup), and each half cut into quarters
- 6 cups water
- Salt
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon dark brown sugar

Cinnamon-Sugar Croutons

- 4 slices white sandwich bread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes with crusts removed
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 4 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Soup 1. Heat butter in large Dutch oven over medium-low heat until foaming; add shallots and cook, stirring frequently, until softened and translucent, about 3 minutes. Add squash scrapings and seeds and cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant and butter turns saffron color, about 4 minutes. Add 6 cups water and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt to Dutch oven and bring to boil over high heat; reduce heat to medium-low, place squash cut-side down in steamer basket, and lower basket into pot. Cover and steam until squash is completely tender, about 30 minutes. Off heat, use tongs to transfer squash to rimmed baking sheet; reserve steaming liquid. When cool enough to handle, use large spoon to scrape flesh from skin into medium bowl; discard skin.

2. Pour reserved steaming liquid through mesh strainer into second bowl; discard solids in strainer. Rinse and dry Dutch oven.

3. In blender, puree squash and reserved liquid in batches, pulsing on low until smooth. Transfer puree to Dutch oven; stir in cream and brown sugar and heat over medium-low heat until hot. Add salt to taste; serve immediately.

For the Croutons 1. Adjust oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 350 degrees. Toss the bread cubes with melted butter in a medium bowl. In a small bowl, combine cinnamon and sugar; sprinkle over the bread cubes and toss to combine.

2. Spread the bread cubes in a single layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake until crisp, 8 to 10 minutes (The croutons can be stored in an airtight container for several days.) Sprinkle over soup just before serving.

TECHNIQUE

TWO WAYS TO CUT SQUASH SAFELY—KNIFE AND RUBBER Mallet

1. Set squash on damp kitchen towel to hold it in place. Position knife on rind of squash.



2. Strike back of knife with rubber mallet to drive knife into squash. Continue to hit knife with mallet until knife cuts through squash.



TECHNIQUE

TWO WAYS TO CUT SQUASH SAFELY—METAL BENCH SCRAPER AND HAMMER

1. Set squash on damp kitchen towel. Position bench scraper on rind.



2. Strike handle of bench scraper with hammer to drive blade into squash. Continue to hit bench scraper with hammer until blade cuts through squash.

