

Roasted Pumpkin Soup

Serves 6-8

Use a heavy, thick-fleshed pumpkin variety like the orange Cinderella (*Rouge Vif d'Etamps*), the beige cheese, or the blue jarrahdale for this soup. Their thick sturdy walls won't collapse as the pumpkin roasts in the oven. Recipe adapted from *Canal House Cooks Everyday*, Hamilton and Hirscheimer.

Ingredients

1 Cinderella, cheese, or blue Jarrahdale pumpkin, 5-8 pounds
4-8 tablespoons butter, softened
1 teaspoon ground fennel seeds
2 generous pinches of piment d'Esplette (basque red chile powder)
Salt and pepper
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1 cup fresh white bread crumbs
2-3 cups grated gruyere cheese
2 bay leaves
4-6 cups chicken stock

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cut out a wide lid around the stem of the pumpkin, scrape off and discard any seeds, and set the lid aside. Using a metal spoon, scoop out and discard the seeds and strings from the inside.

Put the pumpkin in a roasting pan, rub the flesh inside the pumpkin with the butter, then with the ground fennel, piment d'Esplette, and salt and pepper to taste. Add the garlic, bread crumbs, cheese and bay leaves. Pour enough stock into the pumpkin to come within about 3 inches of the rim. Fit the lid back on the pumpkin.

Roast the pumpkin for 1 hour. Remove the lid and place it flesh side up beside the pumpkin. Continue roasting the pumpkin until the flesh inside is soft when pierced with a paring knife, taking care not to puncture the skin, 30-90 minutes depending on the size of the pumpkin.

Carefully transfer the pumpkin to a serving platter. Remove and discard the bay leaves. Replace the lid for effect, if you like. Serve the pumpkin soup at the table, scraping big spoonfuls of the flesh from the bottom and sides into the broth, then ladling the soup into bowls.

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