

Winter Squash Soup with Apple, Smoky Bacon and Sage

Prep: 20 minutes Cook: 1 hour Serves: 8-10

8 slices thick cut smoked bacon
1 (3 pound) butternut squash, peeled, seeded and diced into 1-inch chunks
4 carrots, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 large onion, chopped
2 granny smith apples, peeled and chopped, plus extra for garnish
1 tablespoon fresh sage, finely chopped, plus extra leaves for garnish
2 teaspoons sweet curry powder
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon Kosher salt
¼ teaspoon white pepper
2 qt Zoup! Good, Really Good™ Chicken Broth, Chicken Bone Broth or Veggie Broth

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Lay bacon out flat in single layer, without overlapping, on lightly sprayed rimmed baking pan. Bake for 14-19 minutes or until bacon has crisped, rotating pan halfway through cooking. Remove bacon from pan with spatula while warm, draining on paper towels and reserve. Pour off fat from pan and reserve.

2. In large bowl, toss squash and half of reserved bacon fat until evenly coated. Transfer squash to lightly sprayed rimmed baking pan, in single layer, and bake for 30-40 minutes until tender and lightly caramelized, stirring occasionally for even cooking.

3. In large pot (6 qt or larger), heat remaining bacon fat over medium-high heat and add carrots, garlic, onion and apples cooking for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add sage, spices, salt and pepper and cook for another 5-10 minutes or until vegetables are softened well. Add cooked squash and broth and bring to boil. Reduce heat to simmer and cook for additional 15-20 minutes for flavors to develop. Puree with immersion blender or regular blender until smooth. If using regular blender, be sure to blend in small batches (half-full), removing center hole lid of blender and covering with dish towel while blending. Additional broth (or water or apple cider) may be added if thinning is needed. Serve hot, garnishing with apples, sage and crumbled bacon. For a special touch, quickly fry whole sage leaves in oil until darkened and crisp!

Chef's Tip: This recipe is easy to make vegetarian if so inclined! Make 'bacon' by tossing thinly sliced mushrooms or eggplant with a little oil, soy or tamari and smoked paprika and bake on lightly sprayed baking pan at 350°F for 30-45 minutes or until slightly crisped, turning vegetables a few times for even cooking. Bacon fat in recipe may be replaced with your preference of butter or oil.