

CURRIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH-LENTIL SOUP

8 servings

This flavorful soup lends itself to variation. Should you have a languishing parsnip, a tiny potato or two, a sweet apple or pear, (and no turnip or carrot, perhaps?) be sure to add these and see what you think. No butternut squash? Try peeled, diced sweet potatoes instead. Only two cups of butternut squash? Increase lentils to a whole cup to thicken the broth. I like mine partially puréed and somewhat creamy –lentils and small pieces of vegetables visible-- but this is also a sturdy chunky entrée for those who like their soups with a little more heft and obvious spots for dunking chunks of grilled bread.

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon minced ginger
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1/4 teaspoon each ground cumin, ground cinnamon, and ground coriander--optional*
- Pinch crushed red or Aleppo pepper
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 stalks celery, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 1 turnip, peeled and diced--optional
- 2 pounds (about 4 cups) diced butternut squash**
- 1/4 cup minced dried apricots (about 8)--optional
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3/4 teaspoon fresh finely ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup white wine—can substitute water or broth
- 2 quarts vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 quart water or more as needed
- 1/2 cup green or brown lentils, washed and picked over
- 1 cup sliced almonds, toasted--for garnish

Heat the oil in a large soup pot over medium flame. Add garlic, ginger, curry powder, and crushed red pepper; stir for 30 seconds. Add the onion, celery, carrots, turnip, squash, and apricots, if using. Stir and sauté for 5-7 minutes or until ingredients are softening and quite hot. Add wine; let cook down until reduced--2 or 3 minutes. Pour in broth and water; bring to a gentle boil and cook about 10 minutes. Stir in lentils, reduce heat to simmer, and cook about 30 minutes or until everything is tender. Taste and adjust seasonings, especially the curry powder and salt. Purée all, part, or none of the soup. Serve hot garnished with a small spoonful of toasted almonds. Good with warm, grilled bread. Pass the black pepper grinder at the table.

*If you're unsure about using these warm spices, take out of the pot a small ladle of soup and add just a tiny sprinkle of one to taste. Try another...Try them together. Soup is the best place to experiment, but no need to ruin a whole pot.

**I bought peeled and chopped Butternut Squash at Costco for ease of preparation.

Storage: Keeps 3-4 days in the refrigerator or 4-6 months in the freezer in airtight containers or freezer bags