

SPICED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

MAKES 10 CUPS; SERVES 6 TO 8

THE INTENSE FLAVOR OF AUTUMN SQUASH is magnified when turned into a smooth, luscious soup. Adding yams provides even more depth of flavor, and Middle Eastern spices keep the sweetness in check.

5 tablespoons unsalted butter	2½ teaspoons kosher salt, or more to taste
2 tablespoons neutral-flavored cooking oil, such as canola or soybean	Pinch of cayenne pepper
1 large yellow onion, diced	¼ teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground cumin	¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more to taste
1 teaspoon ground coriander	¾ cup sliced almonds
1¾ pounds butternut squash (1 large squash), peeled, seeded, and sliced	2 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh sage
1½ pounds yams, peeled and sliced	

In a heavy-bottomed 8-quart stockpot, heat 1 tablespoon of the butter and the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until soft but not browned, about 4 minutes. Stir in the cumin and coriander and cook for 1 minute.

Add the butternut squash, yams, 8 cups water, and salt. Simmer for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the vegetables are very soft. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Alternatively, pour the mixture into a food processor or blender and return it to the pot after processing.

Stir in the cayenne pepper, nutmeg, and black pepper. Taste for seasoning and add additional salt, cayenne pepper, nutmeg, or black pepper as needed.

For the topping, melt the remaining 4 tablespoons butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the almonds and sauté until light golden brown, stirring frequently. Add the sage and continue to stir for 1 minute, or until the almonds are golden brown and the sage is fragrant. Remove the topping to a bowl to cool.

To serve, garnish each bowl of soup with 1½ tablespoons of the topping.

MAKE AHEAD The soup will keep, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months. Gently reheat over low heat, stirring frequently to avoid burning.