

K's Kitchen: Squash soup satisfies on cold fall day

By Kathryn Reed

It's the first snowfall of the season and two butternut squashes are staring at me. It's time to turn them into something else.



Oh, and my Jeep is in the shop. I'm in fall mode and not winter so I'm not about to walk to the store to get the ingredients for the squash soup that I really like. It's time to wing it.

What I came up with was good, but I have to admit I like Teena Hildebrand's recipe better. She along with her husband own Narrow Gate Vineyards in Placerville.

Hildebrand's soup is richer, more elegant, thicker and better to serve to guests. Mine is easier, faster and great for the family.

Both make lots – which I always think is a bonus.

I'm including both recipes because both are worth trying. You decide which to serve when.

Kae's Squash Soup

1 onion, chopped

2 butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into bite size pieces

Oil, to coat pan

8 C veggie broth

3 apples, chopped

2 tsp sage

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp white pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ C pure Vermont maple syrup

Coat pan with oil. Add onion. Cook until opaque. Add squash and apples. Then add broth. Bring to boil. Puree soup in blender. Return to stove. Add spices and syrup. Once hot, serve.

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Hildebrand uses homemade veggie stock and says it makes a world of difference. I used store bought and was more than satisfied. All the comments below are from Hildebrand.

Butternut Squash, Golden Delicious Apple & Sweet Potato Soup

8 T (1 stick) butter, divide into 2T and 6T

$2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces (about 6 cups)

1 pound sweet potato or yam, roasted and removed from skin

2 C chopped white or yellow onion

$\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped carrot

$\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped celery

2 small golden delicious apples, peeled, cored, chopped

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried thyme or 1 tablespoon fresh

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp crumbled dried sage leaves or 1 teaspoon fresh

6+ C vegetable stock (can also use chicken stock)

1½ C fresh or unfiltered apple cider (I use Boa Vista unpasteurized from Apple Hill)

2/3 C creme fraiche (can substitute good quality sour cream)

½ C heavy whipping cream (optional, can also use half & half or tempered sour cream)

12 to 24 fresh small (1/2-inch long) sage leaves

Melt 6T butter in a heavy large stockpot or saucepan over medium-high heat. Add butternut squash, sweet potatoes, onions, carrots and celery; sauté until slightly softened, about 15 minutes. Mix in chopped golden delicious apples, dried thyme and dried sage. Add stock and 1 cup of the cider; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer until squash and apples are tender, stirring mixture occasionally, about 30 minutes. Remove from burner and cool.

Puree soup in blender, food processor or with a hand held stick blender to a smooth consistency. Return soup to stock pot or saucepan and whisk in ½ cup whipping cream, thin with more stock if too thick. Season with sea salt and white pepper (optional).

Apple Cider reduction Creme Fraiche:

Boil remaining ½ cup of cider until reduced to ¼ cup. Cool. Place creme fraiche in small bowl and whisk in reduced cider.

Crispy Sage leaves in Brown Butter

Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in a small sauté pan over med-high heat. Heat until butter just starts to brown (do not burn) and add fresh sage leaves, cook until crisp and remove to paper towel lined plate.

Bring soup to a simmer, ladle into bowls, drizzle with apple cider reduction creme fraiche and top with a crispy brown butter sage leaf.

Soup and apple cider creme fraiche can be made up to 3 days in advance, covered separately and refrigerated.