



Spiced Butternut Squash soup with Cheddar Cheese Coins

4 1/2 pounds butternut squash, pumpkin or sweet potatoes (or combination)
3 Tablespoons olive oil
2/3 cup chopped red onion
5 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
1 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon chili pepper (optional)
2 teaspoons kosher salt
6 cups water (or more to cover squash)
1/2 cup creme fraiche, yogurt, dairy sour cream (low fat), or sweet cream
1/3 cup mixed fresh finely chopped cilantro and Italian parsley (or all parsley)

Scrub squash and cut off stem. Slice in half lengthwise and remove seeds and strands. Peel and cut into cubes.

In a large soup pot with cover, heat the oil and saute the onion over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until transparent and lightly golden. Add the garlic and saute 1 minute. Add the squash cubes, paprika, all spice, chili pepper, and salt. Add 6 cups of water (or just enough to cover the squash), and bring to a boil. Cover and cook over medium-low heat for 30-40 minutes, until squash is fork-tender.

Remove from heat and puree in batches in a blender or food processor. Return to pot and cook an additional 5 minutes (or reheat gently just before serving). Divide among bowls, and garnish each with a tablespoon of creme fraiche, yogurt, sour cream. Take a knife and make a zig zag pattern, and garnish each with 1 1/2 teaspoons of the cilantro-parsley mixture. Place a couple of sharp cheddar crackers (recipe follows) on top and serve.

Cheddar Cheese Coins

Makes: about 60 coins

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour and 10 minutes which includes 1 hour refrigeration

8oz. sharp cheddar cheese, grated/shredded 2 cups

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 stick of unsalted butter-softened

1/2 tsp salt

1/8 tsp cayenne pepper

1/4 tsp paprika

2-4 TBL water

Pulse all of the ingredients EXCEPT the water in a food processor until combined, about 12 pulses. Transfer to a large mixing bowl. Sprinkle with 2 TBL of water. Squeeze the mixture between your hands to form a ball, adding more water if necessary. Form the dough into two 10-inch logs. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 400. Slice the logs into 1/8-inch coins and place on parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake to golden brown about 7-10 minutes. Cool for 3 minutes on the baking sheets, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

*Can make dough up to 2 days ahead and refrigerate or keep frozen for up to 1 month. If frozen, refrigerate to thaw before baking.

Submitted by Karen Bloomfield and Debbie Patashnik