

Butternut Squash and White Bean Soup with Sage-Walnut Pesto

From *Cooks Illustrated*

Pesto

½ cup walnuts, toasted
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 cup fresh parsley leaves
½ cup fresh sage leaves
¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup), plus extra for serving
Salt and pepper

Soup

1 (2- to 2 ½ pound) butternut squash
4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
3 cups water
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 pound leeks, white and light green parts only, halved lengthwise, sliced thin, and washed thoroughly
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 garlic cloves, minced
Salt and pepper
3 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans
1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

INSTRUCTIONS

FOR THE PESTO: Pulse walnuts and garlic in food processor until coarsely chopped, about 5 pulses. Add parsley and sage; with processor running, slowly add oil and process until smooth, about 1 minute. Transfer to bowl, stir in Parmesan, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

FOR THE SOUP: Using sharp vegetable peeler or chef's knife, remove skin and fibrous threads just below skin from squash (important: peel until squash is completely orange with no white flesh remaining, roughly 1/8 inch deep). Cut round bulb section off squash and cut in half lengthwise. Scoop out and discard seeds; cut each half into 4 wedges.

Bring squash wedges, broth, water, butter, and soy sauce to boil in medium saucepan over high heat. Reduce heat to medium, partially cover, and simmer vigorously until squash is very tender and starting to fall apart, about 20 minutes. Using potato masher or immersion blender, mash squash, still in broth, until completely broken down. Cover to keep warm; set aside.

While broth cooks, cut neck of squash into 1/3-inch pieces. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add leeks and tomato paste and cook, stirring occasionally, until leeks have softened and tomato paste has darkened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add squash pieces, ¾ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add squash broth and bring to simmer. Partially cover and cook for 10 minutes or until squash pieces are soft.

Add beans and their liquid, partially cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until squash is just tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in vinegar and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, passing pesto and extra Parmesan separately. Serves 6-8, generously.