

Spiced pumpkin soup with ginger browned butter

Warm spices and caramelized onions underscore the natural sweetness of pumpkin and butternut squash in this comforting dish. The easy swirl of ginger butter at the end adds a bit of flavor and a lot of style.

PREP AND COOK TIME 1¾ hours

MAKES 8 servings

NOTES You can substitute 3½ lbs. packaged peeled-and-cubed butternut squash for the pumpkin and squash called for below: Skip steps 1 and 3, decrease the amount of broth to 7 cups, and add the squash with the broth and carrots to the onion mixture in step 4. Cook until all vegetables are tender, about 25 minutes.

2 lbs. Sugar Pie or other baking pumpkin

2 lbs. butternut or acorn squash

8 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth, divided

7 tbsp. butter, divided

2 medium onions, chopped

About 1 tsp. salt

4 cloves garlic, chopped

2 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. freshly grated ginger, divided

1 tsp. ground ginger

¼ tsp. freshly ground nutmeg

⅓ tsp. ground cloves

⅓ tsp. freshly ground cardamom seeds (from about 4 pods)

2 carrots, peeled and chopped

½ cup packed light brown sugar

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Cut pumpkin and squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and any stringy parts. Put flesh side up in a large roasting pan with 1 cup broth. Cover pan with foil and bake until vegetables are tender when pierced with a fork, about 1 hour.

2. Meanwhile, melt 3 tbsp. butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add onions and 1 tsp. salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are soft and start to look creamy, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low or medium-low and cook onions, stirring every few minutes, until they turn a caramel color and become quite sweet, about 30 minutes. Set aside.

3. When pumpkin and squash are tender, scoop out flesh and set aside; discard skins. Reserve any liquid in bottom of pan.

4. Return pot with onions to medium-high heat. Add garlic and 2 tbsp. fresh ginger. Cook, stirring, until fragrant, about

2 minutes. Add ground ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and cardamom. Cook, stirring, 1 minute. Add remaining 7 cups broth, the carrots, cooked pumpkin and squash, and reserved liquid from roasting pan. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until carrots are tender, about 15 minutes.

5. Whirl vegetables in a blender (in batches) until completely smooth. (For silky-smooth soup, you can pour the puréed soup through a strainer.) Return to pot and stir in brown sugar. Season with salt to taste. Keep warm over low heat.

6. Put a small bowl or measuring cup next to the stove. Melt remaining 4 tbsp. butter in a small frying pan over medium-high heat. Add remaining 1 tsp. fresh ginger. Cook, stirring occasionally, until butter starts to foam. Stir mixture constantly until it starts to brown. Pour mixture into waiting bowl or measuring cup. Divide soup among 8 bowls and serve hot, with a swirl of ginger browned butter in each serving.

PER SERVING 248 CAL., 36% (90 CAL.) FROM FAT; 5.6 G PROTEIN; 10 G FAT (6.3 G SAT.); 37 G CARBO (3.2 G FIBER); 982 MG SODIUM; 27 MG CHOL.

Wild rice and mushroom soup

A little cream goes a long way in this earthy, supremely comforting soup.

PREP AND COOK TIME 1½ hours

MAKES 8 servings

NOTES Look for whole wild rice grains; they cook more evenly and keep their nutty-chewy texture better than split or broken grains do. Pancetta is available at specialty markets and Italian delis; you can substitute bacon if you like.

¾ cup wild rice (see Notes)

1 tbsp. salt

1 oz. dried porcini mushrooms

5 tbsp. butter at room temperature, divided

4 oz. pancetta, finely chopped (see Notes)

8 oz. button mushrooms, finely chopped

1 leek, halved, rinsed, and white and light green parts thinly sliced

2 tbsp. flour

½ cup dry white wine

4 cups reduced-sodium chicken or vegetable broth

3 tbsp. minced flat-leaf parsley

½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

⅔ cup heavy whipping cream

1. Put wild rice, salt, and 8 cups cold water in a medium pot. Bring to a boil, lower heat to maintain a steady simmer, and cook until rice is tender, about 45 minutes. Drain and set aside.

2. Meanwhile, put porcini in a small bowl and pour in 1½ cups boiling water. Let sit until soft, about 15 minutes.

3. In a large pot, cook 1 tbsp. butter and pancetta over medium-high heat until the meat renders some of its fat and turns a lighter pink. Add button mushrooms and leek. Cook, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms give off their liquid, about 10 minutes.

4. Meanwhile, lift porcini from liquid with a slotted spoon (reserving liquid), chop finely, and add to pot.

5. Sprinkle vegetables and pancetta with flour and cook, stirring constantly, until flour starts to stick to the bottom of the pot (scrape it up as much as possible while stirring). Add wine, reserved liquid from soaking porcini (pouring slowly so as to leave any grit behind), and broth. Bring to a boil, then lower heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook 15 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, combine remaining 4 tbsp. butter, the parsley, and pepper. Set aside.

7. Add reserved wild rice to vegetable mixture and cook 10 minutes. Stir in cream and cook until hot, about 1 minute. Divide soup among 8 bowls and serve hot, with a dollop of parsley butter on each serving.

PER SERVING 305 CAL., 62% (189 CAL.) FROM FAT; 8.1 G PROTEIN; 21 G FAT (12 G SAT.); 20 G CARBO (2.5 G FIBER); 818 MG SODIUM; 55 MG CHOL.

Root vegetable soup with meatballs

We love the play between the delicate, slightly sweet purée of turnips and parsnips and the savory cheese- and herb-enhanced meatballs. Serve this soup as the first course for a fall dinner party.

PREP AND COOK TIME 50 minutes

MAKES 6 servings

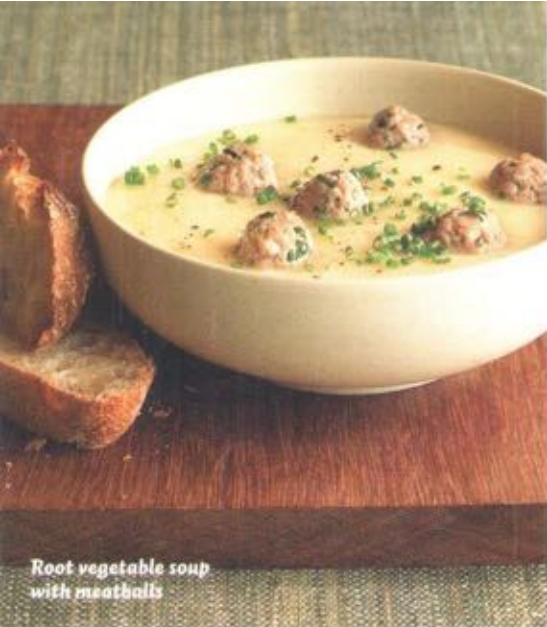
NOTES Some bread and a simple green salad turn this soup into an elegant meal for 4.

2 tbsp. butter

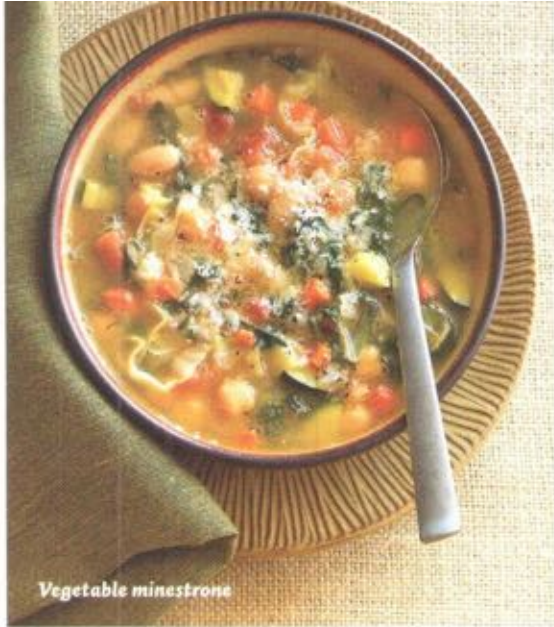
1 medium onion, chopped

2 tsp. salt, divided

2 medium turnips (about 1 lb.), peeled and chopped



Root vegetable soup
with meatballs



Vegetable minestrone

6 medium parsnips (about 1½ lbs.), peeled and chopped

5 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth

½ lb. ground pork

1 tbsp. minced chives, plus more for garnish

1 tbsp. minced flat-leaf parsley

3 tbsp. finely grated asiago, parmesan, or pecorino cheese

About ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1. Melt butter in a medium pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and ½ tsp. salt. Cook, stirring, until soft, about 2 minutes. Add turnips, parsnips, broth, and 1 cup water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until vegetables are tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, combine pork, 1 tbsp. chives, parsley, cheese, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper in a small bowl. Mix gently to combine. Form into 36 balls, about 1 tsp. each, and set aside.

3. Whirl soup in a blender until smooth (in batches if necessary). Return to pot and keep warm over low heat.

4. In a wide, shallow pan, bring at least 2 in. of water to a boil and add remaining 1 tsp. salt. Add meatballs and cook until they float to the surface and are cooked through (test one to be sure), about 4 minutes. Transfer to a warm plate with a slotted spoon.

5. Divide soup among 6 bowls. Top each bowl with 6 meatballs and sprinkle with

additional chives and pepper. Serve hot.

PER SERVING 243 CAL., 41% (99 CAL.) FROM FAT; 12 G PROTEIN; 11 G FAT (5.2 G SAT.); 25 G CARBO (6.3 G FIBER); 1,206 MG SODIUM; 37 MG CHOL.

Vegetable minestrone

The variety of the vegetables, two kinds of legumes, and the Italian trick of cooking a bit of parmesan rind in the soup for added flavor create a palate-pleasing minestrone miles beyond the bland bean-and-pasta version so often served. The soup is flexible too; add your favorite vegetables or use whatever is bountiful in your garden this harvest.

PREP AND COOK TIME 1 hour

MAKES 10 servings

NOTES This soup keeps frozen for up to 3 months.

1 bunch Swiss chard, rinsed thoroughly

4 medium tomatoes

2 cans (14½ oz. each) cannellini beans, rinsed and drained, divided

2 tbsp. olive oil

4 cloves garlic, minced

2 medium carrots, peeled and cut into ¼-in. dice

2 medium zucchini, quartered lengthwise and cut into ¼-in. pieces

½ tsp. salt

½ cup dry white wine

2 cups shredded savoy or green cabbage

1 can (14½ oz.) chickpeas (garbanzos), rinsed and drained

3- to 4-in. parmesan cheese rind

4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth

About ½ cup freshly shredded parmesan

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil.

Meanwhile, cut stems from Swiss chard leaves by making a V-shaped cut into each leaf around the stem. Finely chop stems, cut leaves into ribbons, and set both aside separately.

2. Boil tomatoes for 30 seconds. Lift out with a slotted spoon and rinse under very cold water. Remove the skin with a paring knife or vegetable peeler. Cut tomatoes into quarters, remove seeds, and chop. Set tomatoes aside.

3. Whirl half of cannellini beans with ½ cup water in a blender until smooth. Set bean purée aside.

4. Cook olive oil and garlic in a large pot over medium-high heat until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add carrots, zucchini, reserved chopped chard stems, and salt. Cook, stirring, until stems are tender, about 5 minutes. Add white wine and cabbage. Cook, stirring, until cabbage wilts, 2 to 3 minutes.

5. Add reserved chard leaves, remaining cannellini beans, the chopped tomatoes, bean purée, chickpeas, parmesan rind, and broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain a steady simmer. Cook until all vegetables are tender and flavors blend, about 15 minutes. Remove parmesan rind. Serve soup hot, topped with shredded parmesan.

PER SERVING 182 CAL., 28% (50 CAL.) FROM FAT; 11 G PROTEIN; 5.6 G FAT (3.4 G SAT.); 22 G CARBO (6.4 G FIBER); 694 MG SODIUM; 3.9 MG CHOL. ■