

Butternut squash soup a warm meal made for cold nights

By Linda Gassenheimer
Tribune News Service

This is comforting, thick, creamy, vegetarian soup that is perfect for this time of year. It's also quick to prep and cook using butternut squash already cut into cubes. Cut cubes can be found in the produce section of the market. You can, also, use butternut squash spirals if cubes aren't available.

I use shallots for the soup. They are a mild-flavored member of the onion family. Shallots break down as they cook, making a smoother sauce than their onion cousins.

Gala or honey crisp apples are used. They're sweet and do not turn brown when cut.

Helpful Hints

- White or any sweet onion can be used instead of shallots.
- If butternut squash cubes or spirals are not available, peel a whole squash and cut into 1-inch cubes. They may take longer to cook.
- 4 crushed garlic cloves can be used instead of bottled minced garlic.
- If using other apples, cut them just before adding them to the soup to prevent them from turning brown.

Countdown

- Prepare ingredients.
- Start soup.
- While soup simmers, toast pecans.
- Finish soup.

Shopping List

- To buy: 1 pound butternut squash cubes, 1 jar minced garlic, 1 small piece fresh ginger or 1 bottle ground ginger, 1 bottle ground nutmeg, 1 carton light cream, 2 shallots, 1 gala or honey crisp apple, 1 whole grain baguette, 1 small container pecan pieces and 1 container vegetable broth.
- Staples: olive oil and salt.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

2 teaspoons olive oil
2 shallots sliced (about 1/2 cup)
2 teaspoons minced garlic



Linda Gassenheimer/TNS

Butternut squash soup.

1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger or 2 teaspoons ground ginger 4 cups butternut squash cubes (about 1 pound) 2 cups vegetable broth 1/2 cup toasted pecan pieces	2 slices toasted whole grain baguette 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg Salt 2 tablespoons light cream 1 cup diced gala or honey crisp apples	Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the shallots, garlic, ginger and butternut squash cubes. Saute 5 minutes stirring several times.
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TRADITION

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While working at the Plimoth Plantation, we were dressed in the traditional, buckskin clothing of Northeastern tribes and demonstrating what life would have been like for Indigenous people in the 1620s. At least once a week, my daily assignment would be to tend to the fire and cook traditional foods over it, and when it was time to make boiled cornbread, I'd have to pound the corn kernels into flour by hand.

In this modern era, at home, I use an electric grain grinder, coffee grinder or food processor to speed up the process. The flour can be used to make boiled cornbread or a corn mush porridge, depending on how finely or coarsely ground you make it.

The second processing method involves boiling the dried corn with hardwood ash to break open the hulls on the corn kernels, through a chemical process known as nixtamalization. It is then strained and washed using a traditional corn-washing basket, a Haudenosaunee utility basket

with small holes in the base that allow water and the hulls to pass through.

Once the hulls are removed, the softened corn is used to make corn soup and Three Sisters rice.

Before colonization, salt and refined sugar would not have been present in the Indigenous diet, so some dishes (such as corn mush) use raw maple sap, maple syrup or locally foraged berries as a natural sweetener.

Living in California, I am thousands of miles away from the Kanien'keha:ka territories where my family is from — Akwesasne in Upstate New York and Kahnawake in Quebec. Though I do not cook traditional dishes as often as I'd like, I try to incorporate the Three Sisters into my daily meals. Preparing and consuming traditional foods like boiled cornbread is one way for me to feel like I am home again, especially as I celebrate Native American Heritage Month in November.

Whether it is eaten for ceremonial purposes or for brunch on Sunday morning with steak, eggs and gravy, boiled cornbread continues to be an important part of

Haudenosaunee culinary culture. White corn can be ordered online as corn flour or kernels from the Ganondagan State Historic Site's Iroquois White Corn Project. In a pinch, other finely ground corn flours can be used in its place.

This recipe is a spin on the traditional preparation of boiled cornbread with kidney beans, but serving it with a butternut squash sauce means even those who are vegan or allergic to gluten can enjoy this dish.

HAUDENOSAUNEE THREE SISTERS BOILED CORNBREAD

Makes 18 dumplings

FOR THE CORNBREAD
8 ounces Mohawk white flint corn flour (see Ingredient Note)
1/2 cup kidney beans, cooked and cooled if using dried beans, or drained and rinsed if using canned beans
1-2 cups hot water
1/2 teaspoon sea salt (see Seasoning Note)

FOR THE SAUCE

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 cup yellow onion, minced
2 garlic cloves, finely minced
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon fresh sage, thinly sliced
1 cup butternut squash or pumpkin puree

Start boiling a large pot of water on the stove over high heat.

Mix flour and salt (if using) together in a bowl, then gently stir in kidney beans. Slowly add in hot water 1/4 cup at a time until the dough can be formed into a firm ball, but is not tacky to the touch. Depending on the weather and how fine the grain on the corn flour is, you may have to add more water or more corn flour.

Using a 3 tablespoon-size ice cream scoop, measure and form balls of dough, then gently flatten against the table to make burger-like patties that are about 3 inches across. Boil cornbread for 20-30 minutes until the patties rise to the top of the pot and are cooked all the way through. Depending on

the size of the pot, you may have to boil the cornbread dumplings in batches.

In a saute pan or cast-iron skillet, heat olive oil over medium-low heat for 2 minutes. Place onions in the pan, cook for 3 minutes while stirring, then add garlic. Continue to cook and stir the onion-garlic mixture until the onions become golden, then sprinkle black pepper, salt, nutmeg and sage into the pan. Pour the butternut squash or pumpkin puree into the pan, then combine all ingredients and continue stirring over heat about 5 minutes, until the squash mixture is hot.

To serve, place boiled cornbread dumplings onto a serving platter, then pour the squash sauce over the top.

- **Ingredient Note:** White corn can be ordered online as corn flour or kernels from the Ganondagan State Historic Site's Iroquois White Corn Project. Other finely ground corn flours or masa harina can also be substituted.
- **Seasoning Note:** It is not traditional to use salt, but many people do today to please modern flavor preferences.

GARDENS

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Our problems and stress can often be reduced by realizing the wonders of other beings which have been given

lives of their own. Life is precious. Rest in peace, Tommy Cat.

GARDEN CHORES

- Covering garden pools with bird netting will prevent

leaves from fouling the water. Oxygen depletion from rotting organic matter can cause winterkill of pond fish.

- Take steps to prevent garden pools from freezing solid. Cover with insulating mate-

rial or float a stock tank water heater in the pond to lessen the chance of ice damage.

- Climbing roses should not be pruned this time of year, but can be mulched well with 6 to 10 inches of mulch over

each rose bush. Prune sparingly only to shorten overly long canes.

- Prevent frost heaving and plant damage by mulching flower and bulb beds.
- Clean, fill and set up bird

feeders. Provide birds with a source of unfrozen water.

- Houseplants in cooler rooms need less water.
- Shorter days mean slower growth. Reduce or eliminate the use of fertilizer.

If you have garden comments or questions, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com Thanks for reading!

CANNING

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That's when those plans went awry.

We didn't need canning jars, but we did need more canning lids, which have a special sealing compound around the rims and are only good for one-time use in preserving food safely.

A quick trip to just about any grocery or hardware store in town would easily take care of that problem — in any year except this one.

At first it seemed that just our go-to store was sold out of canning lids. But we soon learned that every store in town — a few of which we didn't even know carried canning lids — had none left in stock and did not expect to be getting more this season.

It was a "Miracle on 34th Street" moment as several clerks at the stores I called referred me to their competitors because they'd heard there were still a few lids on the shelves in their stores. The experience brought to mind the scenes from the 1947 movie when Kris Kringle, who was Santa at the Macy's department store, referred customers to Gimbels department store for better prices or selection.

Just like in "Miracle on 34th Street," I gained new respect for the clerks who endeared themselves to me by going out of their way to try to help in my search to find canning lids this fall.

As our Labor Day travelers prepared for their trips, orders were given for them to check in their towns for the

lids as well. No luck at any stores along the way.

My dear sister astutely pointed out: "You should have checked sooner. We have them here."

We resorted to purchasing three dozen quart jars, which come with lids — the last three dozen on the shelf. We prefer pint jars, but in our desperation, we could not be particularly particular. (We later returned the quart jars for someone else to use in their canning projects.)

We were able to get through a first batch of peaches with the lids we had on hand.

But the question remained about how to preserve our prune and apple jam, salsa and pizza sauce we had planned to make without lids to fit our sauce-size jars.

My sister, who says she meant no sarcasm with her earlier comment, came to the rescue. She made a trip to town where she expected to pick up as many lids as she wanted ... only to find her plan also had gone awry.

There were no lids in the stores in her town either. She turned to the internet only to find that the price of lids had gone up astronomically. (A recent price check shows internet sales for one dozen lids, which had gone for less than \$5 in the past, is now at about \$25.)

Luckily for me, my generous sister saved her money and shipped me the required regular-size lids from her personal stock. My mom chipped in a collection of rings that are screwed over the lids to hold them in place during

the hot-water bath processing that preserves the product inside for months to come.

My neighbor, who shared her backyard bounty of peaches with my family this summer, also came to the rescue with her own supply of jars and canning lids.

So, as I considered Thanksgiving, I had to admit that the change of plans that we've been hit with this year have not been insurmountable thanks to the love and support of family and friends who are always willing to help us work through our struggles together.

Including providing canning lids which — just like toilet paper — unexpectedly flew off the shelves this year!

Chris Collins is a reporter for the Baker City Herald.



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