

Squash Soup with Red Curry and Coconut

Here's a creamy soup with a silky texture and a great combination of complementary flavors. This dish gets some back heat from Thai Red Curry Paste; feel free to adjust the heat level to your preference. Also, you can easily make this soup vegetarian by substituting vegetable broth for the chicken broth.

Makes 3 cups

1 small acorn squash, about 1-3/4 pounds
1 tablespoon + 2 teaspoons canola oil, divided
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup chopped onion
1/2 teaspoon Thai red curry paste, or more, to taste
1 cup light coconut milk
1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
1-1/2 teaspoons lime juice
Unsweetened flaked coconut and/or cilantro sprigs, for garnish, wholly optional

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Use a large, heavy knife to cut the squash in half. Scrape out the strings and seeds and discard. Place the squash halves cut side down on a board and cut into 1-inch slices. Lay flat on a rimmed baking sheet in a single layer.

Drizzle the squash with 1 tablespoon of the oil and rub in well on both sides. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Slide in the oven and roast for 20 minutes, turning with tongs halfway through, or until nicely browned on both sides. Allow to cool slightly, then use your fingers or a spoon to slip off the peels. It doesn't matter if you make a mess because the soup will be pureed.

In a medium soup pot, heat the remaining 2 teaspoons of oil over medium heat and saute the onions, stirring, until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the red curry paste and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the peeled, roasted squash, coconut milk, and chicken broth, and raise the heat. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.

Use a stick blender (or a real blender) to puree the soup until smooth, exercising caution, please, as soup is hot. Season with lime juice and check for salt and pepper. Garnish, if desired, with unsweetened toasted coconut and/or cilantro sprigs.