

Roasted Butternut Squash & Bacon Soup

Recipe Courtesy of Chungah Rhee, damndelicious.net

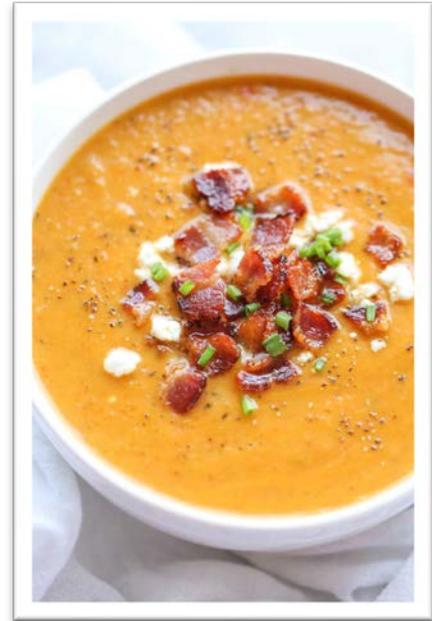
MVP of the gourd world, the butternut squash might be fall's most versatile (and beloved!) vegetable. This creamy comforting soup will be the perfect starter to your Thanksgiving feast and a great nutritious low-calorie option.

Ingredients:

- 1 butternut squash (about 3 pounds), peeled, seeded and cut in 1-inch chunks
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 4 slices bacon, diced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

FOR THE SOUP

- 4 slices bacon, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 1/2 cups chicken stock, or more, to taste
- 1/4 cup crumbled goat cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly oil a baking sheet or coat with nonstick spray.
2. Place butternut squash, onion, bell pepper and bacon in a single layer onto the prepared baking sheet. Add olive oil and garlic; season with salt and pepper, to taste. Gently toss to combine.
3. Place into oven and bake for 25-30 minutes, or until butternut squash is tender, stirring at half-time.*
4. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add bacon and cook until brown and crispy, about 6-8 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.
5. Heat a large stockpot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add butternut squash mixture and thyme, and cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant, about 1-2 minutes; season with salt and pepper, to taste. Stir in chicken stock and puree with an immersion blender. If you do not have an immersion blender a regular blender will do the trick.
6. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until slightly thickened, about 5-10 minutes. If the soup is too thick, add more chicken stock as needed until desired consistency is reached.
7. Serve immediately, garnished with bacon, goat cheese and chives, if desired.