African Squash and Peanut Soup

Ingredients:

- 3 winter squash (I used two butternut and one acorn)
- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 Tablespoon peanut oil
- 4 medium/large onions
- ~2 quarts broth or stock (Vegetable broth is great and would make this meal entirely vegetarian; I used chicken)
- 1-2 jalapenos or other moderately hot chiles
- 3-4 Tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 collection spices (see below)

What’s in that little bowl of spices?

- 1/8 teaspoon coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon cumin
- 1/8 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon hot Hungarian paprika (Spanish is an inferior product)
- 1 pinch (or perhaps a smidge) ground cinnamon
- 1 pinch (or perhaps a smidge) ground cloves

That may not seem like much spice, but the idea here is to support the primary squash and peanut butter flavor, not overwhelm it.

Clean and seed the squash and sweet potato. Slice them into 1.5-inch chunks, coat lightly with peanut oil and bake at 350 for 1 hour or more, until soft and lightly browned.

Slice the onions semi-finely.

Put them in a pan with 2 Tablespoons peanut oil and caramelize them.

This is a long process (it might even take longer than the squash, depending on the surface area of your pan) so don’t rush it. Your patience will be rewarded.

Finely dice the jalapeno(s).

1 pound fresh asparagus spears, trimmed

Move the squash and sweet potato from their skins and put in a pot with the onions (save a few for garnish), jalapeno(s) and some peanut oil.

Saute at medium-high heat until the chiles start to sweat. Stir frequently to avoid sticking/scorching. Add broth/stock to cover, then add the peanut butter.

Stir to combine, then simmer for ~15 minutes. Before serving, hit the soup with a stick blender until wonderfully smooth.

Serve your African Squash and Peanut Soup.

Asparagus Pasta Salad

Serves: 4-6

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. fresh asparagus, cut into 3/4-inch pieces
- 2 c. bowtie pasta
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 TB honey
- 1 garlic clove, minced (optional)

Directions:

Steam asparagus 4 to 6 minutes.
Cool, drain and reserve.
Cook pasta; drain, rinse and drain. Cool.
Mix remaining ingredients together.
Pour over pasta. Toss.
Add asparagus, 3 green onions with tops (chopped) and 2 ounces crumbled Bleu cheese.
Cover. Refrigerate 2 hours or overnight.

Grilled Asparagus

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 1 pound fresh asparagus spears, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat grill for high heat.
Lightly coat the asparagus spears with olive oil.
Season with salt and pepper to taste.
Grill over high heat for 2 to 3 minutes, or to desired tenderness