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).

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.

Collard Salad

Ingredients:

For Vinaigrette:

¼ cup olive oil
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons water
1 tablespoon honey, agave, or maple syrup
1 heaping teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper

For Salad:

1 bunch collard greens, stripped from stems
½ cup red onion, sliced
¼ cup raw pumpkin seeds
¼ cup raisins (golden are preferred)

Preparation:

Roll collard leaves into a cylinder and slice very thin. Pour enough dressing on top of greens to saturate them, then gently massage leaves to make them more tender. Top with red onion and pumpkin seeds, and dried fruit. Mix. Add more dressing if needed. Enjoy!

Creamed Collards

Ingredients

4 pounds collard greens (4 bunches), tough stems and ribs removed
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 large shallots, minced
2 large garlic cloves, minced
2 cups heavy cream
Pinch freshly grated nutmeg
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/4 pound Parmesan, grated

Directions:

Bring a very large stockpot of water to a boil. Prepare a large bowl of ice water. Add half of the collard greens to the boiling water, a little at a time, and push them down into the water. Let the water return to a boil, then cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the greens to the bowl with the ice water to reserve. Repeat with the remaining greens. Drain the greens very well and squeeze them dry in a kitchen towel, then finely shred.

In a very large skillet, melt the butter. Add the shallots and garlic and cook over moderate heat until softened, about 6 minutes. Stir in the cream and simmer, stirring occasionally, until reduced by half, about 25 minutes.

Add the greens to the cream and toss until warmed through, about 3 minutes. Season generously with nutmeg and salt and pepper. Add to serving dish and sprinkle with the Parmesan.