

Creamy Butternut Squash Pasta with Sausage, Sage, and Pecans

Serves 4-6

Background:

For us, nothing says winter like Harvest, squash, and root vegetables. In our garden this year we planted butternut squash and when it fruited, we went, “What is this weird squash?!” It just so happened we ended up with an interesting Italian heirloom variety called *Rogosa Violina Gioia* that’s very large, tan, wrinkled, and quite different from the classic variety we see here. It was a great surprise and we plan on planting that variety from now on because we think it tastes exceptional!

This pasta is sweet and rich, and was gleaned from a New York Times recipe we ran across that reminds us of our Butternut Squash Soup, so we blended the two recipes together and made some “Italian” modifications. Enjoy!

Ingredients:

2 ½ pounds butternut squash, seeded, peeled, and cubed into small cubes
4 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper
1 lb. mild Italian sausage
Juice of ½ lemon
1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
1 lb. short pasta like rotini or penne
½ cup whipping cream
8 tablespoons butter
¾ cup fresh sage leaves, roughly chopped
¾ cup pecans, roughly chopped (can be substituted with walnuts)
Grated Parmesan cheese for serving

Method:

Heat oven to 400°F. Put the cubed squash and garlic on a sheet pan and top with olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Toss until coated and roast in the oven about 30 minutes, or until tender.

While the squash is cooking, in a large skillet cook the Italian sausage, breaking it up into small bite sized pieces while cooking. Cook until done, about 10 minutes. Drain off the liquids and set aside.

Once the squash and garlic are done, transfer to a blender or food processor and add 1 cup of stock. Puree the mixture until smooth and creamy and transfer to the skillet where the sausage was cooked and cook on very low heat, just to keep it warm. Add cream, sausage, and lemon juice to the mixture. Salt and pepper to taste, keeping mind the butter added later will add more salt.

Heat a large pot of water of water to a boil and boil pasta until al dente. Save 1 cup of pasta water, then drain the pasta and place in the skillet with the butternut squash sauce and toss, adding pasta water as needed.

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-low until melted. Add sage and nuts, and cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring often, to crisp up the sage and achieve a brown butter sauce. Take off heat when it is done so it does not burn.

Divide the pasta up into serving bowls and top with a spoonful or so of the sage and pecan butter and sprinkle on Parmesan cheese.

