

Butternut Squash With a Serious Kick!

Fall is my favorite season. DC is a great city to experience it because we really do see all the characteristics of the four seasons. Atlanta on the other hand isn't so generous. Sure, leaves change colors and fall, but the weather just doesn't get as cold as I like to to get all comfy and cozy.

With fall comes some of my favorite vegetables. It's the perfect time to go to farmer's markets, pick the prettiest, most fresh and ripest ingredients, and even learn about new things people are growing.

*In my parents house, we grew up eating butternut squash, or "calabaza". Lots of it. NOT to be confused with the real **calabaza**, which is in the gourd family, and looks completely different and akin to the some parts of Africa and the Americas. Butternut squash, similar to pumpkin, is actually indigenous to Mexico. Did you know that! Both **calabaza** and butternut squash belong to the *cucurbita* genus. I know I'm dropping some scientific facts, but since I love it so much, I thought it'd be good to know its background.*

Butternut squash was something we had at least 3 times a week. It was mostly made into mashes, but on the delicious occasion, **mami** would would roast them and season them with incredible herbs and spices. You know garlic was always in the dish. Well if not garlic, then onion. In fact, a wonderful French fusion squash salad she came up many years ago has made it's way into the cookbook I'm working on (yes, STILL working on). It's roasted chunks of squash, egg and other great ingredients.

Eating squash so much hasn't changed, and thank God.

Butternut squash has got be one of my most desired vegetables. I just love the color, which is vibrant and great on the eye. The raw smell isn't all that enticing, but it is such a versatile vegetable (the options are just about unlimited), that the smell doesn't matter. It's a tremendous source of vitamins A & C, not too high in sugar, though it gets sweeter as it's cooked and low in fat. Doesn't that just scream "**give me more?**"

One of the best things about spending time in my mother's kitchen when I come up, is that I get to play around with the utterly insane abundance of food she has in inventory. I swear she could and would feed a family of 9 everyday. Oh wait, she does that already with all the crazy ass Cubans that just "happen" to be in the **barrio** during dinner time.

Last night was no different.

She had 2 squash laying around and I decided to make her a dish?very different to what she would typically make. Acutally, something extremely easy, yet full of seasonal spices and aromas.

SPICY MASH. Oh yeah, baby!

Simple, but good as hell.

Because the squash is a tough and strong veggie, it can take some time to steam or even bake and roast. So what do you think I used to super cook my 5 lb. squash?

Pressure cooker! God, I love that thing! I wish all of you would try one.

I cut it up, placed a small amount of water in the pot (the squash retains a lot of its own water, so you need to be careful with not adding too much more? thus probably why steaming is preferred? but who has time to do all that when the pressure cooker will knock it out in less than 8 minutes! This works for many other vegetables, too. You may think it is simple and nothing too fancy, and there's some truth to that. But the spicy kick is what separates this from other squash mashes!

So I went to work and this was our side dish for dinner last night (among other DELICIOUSNESS of food!)

SPICY BUTTERNUT SQUASH MASH

Ingredients:

- 1 medium to large size butternut squash
- 4 cups water
- 1 tsp. salt
- 4 cloves
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. fresh nutmeg
- 1.5 tbsp. butter or margarine
- 3 tbsp. honey
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper

Method:

Peel and cut butternut squash in half, lengthwise. Using spoon, scoop out seeds. Cut into 5 or 6 chunks. Add water, squash, salt and cloves to pressure cooker. Close lid and cook on high pressure for 8-10 minutes. Turn off heat and allow ALL of pressure to be released. DO NOT attempt to open pressure cooker until all of the pressure is out (if you're using an older, vintage model). **[New note 11/12: allow all excess water to drain.]** Place squash in large bowl. Using fork, mash well. If you'd like, you can remove the cloves. Add butter, cinnamon, nutmeg, cayenne and honey. Stir until all ingredients have blended well.

Serves 6.

OH HOW COULD I FORGET TO MENTION GOODIE WINNERS!!

WINNER OF THE 3 CANISTERS OF VILLAGE TEA CO. LOOSE LEAF IS

Julianna of [SIMPLE RECIPES!!!](#) Yay you, girlfriend! Congrats! I'll email you with information on getting your tea! I know you will love it! Thanks to all those that entered with their comments.