

Smoked Butternut Squash Soup

Confit Chicken Leg, Chive Crème

(Makes about 2 quarts of soup, serves 8)

Chicken:

8	Chicken Leg Quarters
1 cup	Kosher Salt
½ cup	Brown Sugar
5 tsp	Granulated Garlic
25	Black Peppercorns, crushed
2 tsp	Ground White Pepper
½ tsp	Ground Cloves
1 tsp	Ground Ginger
1 tsp	Ground Nutmeg
3	Bay Leaves, crushed
2 tsp	Dry Thyme
2 qts	Chicken Stock

Soup:

4 cups	Butternut Squash, peeled, seeded, and cubed
	Hickory Wood Smoking Chips
1 Tbs	Olive Oil
½ cup	Yellow Onion, diced
1 qt	Chicken Stock
½ cup	Maple Syrup
2 Tbs	Cornstarch
1 pint	Heavy Cream
½ tsp	Cayenne Pepper
	Salt

"This is one of my favorite soups. The fall is my favorite time to cook and especially to eat. At the beginning of September—still undeniably summer in South Carolina—I start thinking (my wife might say dreaming) about butternut squash. The magic of this soup is the combination of smoky and salty butternut squash and the sweet maple syrup all held together in silky cream with just a kick of spice."

For the Chicken: Start at least one day ahead. Rinse the chicken legs and pat them dry. Make a dry spice mix with the remaining ingredients except the chicken stock. Generously coat the chicken pieces in the spice mix. Wrap the chicken legs in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 24 hours and up to 3 days. Remove the plastic wrap from the chicken and rinse thoroughly under cold running water, rubbing the chicken with your hands to remove as much of the spice mix as possible. Heat the chicken stock in a pan large enough to hold the legs and the liquid. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and add the chicken legs. Simmer the chicken legs uncovered for about 1 hour or until they become quite tender. Remove the legs from the liquid and allow them to cool slightly. When the chicken is just cool enough to handle, remove the skin, pull the meat from the bones, and shred it with your hands. Use the chicken now or refrigerate until needed.

For the Soup: Smoke the butternut squash in a smoker or on the grill, for 3 to 5 minutes (see the method on page 49). The squash quickly picks up the smoke flavor and can become bitter if smoked too long.

Sauté the onion in a large soup pot with the olive oil until it is soft and lightly caramelized. Add the smoked butternut squash and the chicken stock. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer uncovered for approximately 30 minutes or until the squash is very tender and falls apart when touched with a fork. Dissolve the cornstarch in the heavy cream, and then add it and the maple syrup to the soup. Bring to a simmer and cook for another 5 minutes. Purée in small batches in a blender. Season with cayenne pepper and salt to taste.

The soup can be made several days in advance and refrigerated until needed. Heat to serve. →

