

Amaretto-Butternut Squash Soup with Cinnamon Toast Croutons

In looking for a way to take butternut squash soup up a notch, I heavily weighed my options. I didn't want to add any extra vegetables and change the flavor, but I wanted something new. Something to add a little kick. I didn't want a ton of spice. I didn't want beans or something that required chew—after all, creamy pureed butternut soup melts in your mouth like nothing else. Enter amaretto. Bourbon was first on the list, but I just thought amaretto was . . . seasonally appropriate, if you will. It's not an overwhelmingly strong flavor as it can sometimes be in foods, and feel free to swap it for the bourbon if that's more your thing. But it's incredibly warming and reaches into the soul. And the crunch on top?! Oh, the crunch on top. I am so all over it.

Serves 2 to 4 · Time: 45 minutes

1 cup whole wheat bread cubes
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 sweet yellow onion, diced
1/4 teaspoon plus a pinch of salt
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons amaretto
4 cups peeled and cubed butternut squash
2 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
2 cups water
1/2 cup canned coconut milk, plus extra for drizzling
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 scallions, sliced
2 tablespoons sunflower seeds

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Spread the bread cubes on a baking sheet and toss them with the olive oil, sugar, and cinnamon. Bake the cubes until golden and crunchy, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove the sheet from the oven and let the croutons cool on the sheet.

2. Meanwhile, while the croutons are baking, heat a large pot over medium heat and add the olive oil and butter. Add the onions with the pinch of salt and stir. Cook until softened, 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for another minute, then pour in the amaretto and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

3. Add the squash cubes, stock, and water to the pot. Cover, reduce the heat to medium-low, and simmer until the squash is soft, 20 minutes. Once the squash is soft, remove the pot from the heat and carefully pour the entire soup mixture into a high-powered blender (you may need to do this in batches). Puree until creamy, about 5 full minutes. Transfer the soup back to the pot and heat it over low heat. Stir in the coconut milk, remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt, and pepper. Taste and season the soup additionally if needed. Ladle the soup into bowls and set the croutons on top. Garnish with the scallions and sunflower seeds. Drizzle extra coconut milk on top, if desired.