

## **Pureed Butternut Squash with Ancho Chili and Cotija**

Recipe 306 of 365

Although I myself will eat butternut squash in almost any incarnation, I think many of those that object to it don't like how many Thanksgiving preparations sweeten it, turning it into a cross between dinner and dessert. Here's a simple, more savory puree, spiced with fresh ancho chili powder and topped with crumbly fresh Mexican *cotija* cheese.

*Note: This would also make a lovely soup - simply thin the puree with broth or stock, reheat, and season to taste.*

TIME: 20 minutes active time

MAKES: 6 servings

1 (2 1/2 pound) butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1" chunks

Salt

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 teaspoons fresh ancho chili powder

1/3 cup heavy cream

Cotija cheese, crumbled

Fill a large saucepan with about 1 1/2" of water. Add squash and a teaspoon of salt, cover, and bring water to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until squash is soft, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat a small skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the oil, then the chili powder, and cook, stirring constantly, for about 20 seconds, until aromatic. (If the chili powder burns, start again.) Transfer the chili oil to a small bowl and set aside.

Drain the squash, transfer to the work bowl of a food processor, add the chili oil and cream, and puree until smooth. Season with additional salt, if necessary, and puree again. Serve hot, topped with cotija.

For Thanksgiving: Make the squash up to 3 days ahead (but don't add the cotija). Transfer the squash to a baking dish, let cool to room temperature, and refrigerate. Squash can be reheated, covered with foil, for 30 minutes in a 350-degree oven, then topped with cheese before serving.