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One of the best ways to make a house into a home is to invite some friends over for a meal. If you try this recipe, let me know how it turns out for you. And if you have a favorite recipe of your own, send it my way.

Katharine's Squash Soup

This recipe comes from the kitchen of my friend Katharine. She lives outside of Boston, where the winter weather makes hearty soups a staple of the season. Our weather here is a lot more mild, but that doesn't mean our recipes need to be. Set aside a little time and indulge yourself this holiday season!

3-4 lbs butternut squash	6 cups chicken stock
4 Tbs butter	½ cup apple cider
6 stalks celery, chopped	1 cup cream
1 ½ large onions, chopped	salt & pepper
3-4 pears, ripe or canned, chopped	

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Cut squash in half and remove seeds & strings. Cook upside down in a pan with about ¼ inch water until soft (approx 40 min).
2. Sauté butter, celery, and onions until soft & translucent – not browned.
3. Add pears to #2, continue sautéing until pears are soft.
4. Blend pear mixture; add to chicken stock in large pot. (Add some of the stock to the pear mix to make blending easier.)
5. Add apple cider to #4; reduce over medium-high heat.
6. When squash is cooked, remove from oven, separate flesh from skin, and mash. Add mashed squash to reduced stock and cook 25 min over medium-low heat, stirring regularly.
7. Add cream, cook 5 more minutes, stirring regularly. Add salt & pepper to taste, and serve hot.

The recipe will serve 8 with plenty of leftovers. A few tips:

- If the squash is still a bit separated from the stock after step #6, run it through the blender again in batches. This will improve the consistency. A 2nd large soup pot will make this a quick process.
- If you can't find butternut squash for some reason, you can use acorn squash instead.
- To serve as an easy appetizer before dinner, follow steps 1-6 ahead of time & refrigerate. Finish step #7 right before dinner.
- Serve with crusty bread & butter for a nice lunch.



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