

Yellow Summer Squash Soup with Sage and Thyme

(From Paula Deen)

Ingredients:

1 pound yellow crookneck squash
1 medium leek
1 large yellow onion, peeled and sliced thin
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup homemade chick broth or ½ cup canned broth mixed with ½ cup water
1 bouquet garni made with a sprig each of thyme, parsley and sage
Salt
White pepper (optional, black pepper)
2 cups half-and-half
¼ cup heavy cream (optional)
4-5 fresh sage leaves, thinly sliced, or 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives

Instructions:

Scrub the squash under cold running water. Trim the blossom and stem ends, and slice crosswise into ½-inch thick rounds. Split the leek lengthwise and wash it well under running water to remove the dirt from between the leaves. Remove and reserve the green tops and slice the white part.

Put the sliced leek, onion and butter in a 4-quart pot over medium heat. Sauté until softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add the squash and toss until hot. Add the broth, bouquet garni, a pinch or so of salt and a liberal grinding of white pepper. Raise the heat to medium high, bring to a boil and reduce the heat to low. Cover and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Turn off the heat.

Remove and discard the bouquet garni. Take up and reserve a cup of solids. Puree the remainder with a hand blender, food processor or blender. Thinly slice the inner pale leek greens. Roughly chop the reserved solids and add them with the leek greens to the puree. Bring back to a simmer over medium heat and simmer until greens are tender, about 5 minutes. The soup can be made ahead; pour it into a bowl set in a basin of ice water and stir until cold; cover and refrigerate.

To serve hot; heat gently over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching, then add the half and half and heat it through. Taste and correct the seasonings. Ladle the soup into heated soup bowls. Garnish with a drizzle of cream and a sprinkling of the fresh sage or chives.

To serve cold; after chilling add the half and half, then taste and correct seasonings. Garnish as you would the hot soup or whip the cream until it forms soft peaks. Put a dollop on each serving and sprinkle with the chopped herbs and white pepper.