

Stuffed Butternut Squash (for 4)

Source: www.splendidtable.org

From *Jacques Pepin's Kitchen: Encore with Claudine*, by Jacques Pepin.

The very simple stuffing is made primarily of the flesh of the squash itself. Garlic, a bit of ginger & chopped scallions are added for flavor. If not fond of ginger, which gives this combination its unusual taste, use less or eliminate it altogether. Bread crumbs, tossed with a little oil & sprinkled atop the filling, become brown & crisp in the oven + their crunchy texture contrasts nicely with the creaminess of the filling.

1 large butternut squash (about 2-1/4 lbs)

3-1/2 TBS canola oil

About 8 scallions, minced (1 cup)

3 cloves garlic, peeled/crushed/finely chopped (2 tsp)

1/2 TBS chopped fresh ginger

1/2 tsp salt

1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

2 small slices bread, processed in food processor = 1 C fresh breadcrumbs

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Split squash in half lengthwise & remove seeds. Score squash flesh, making 1/2" deep cuts through it 1 way & then the other (in a checker-board pattern). Arrange squash halves cut side up on cookie sheet & place in oven till flesh is tender when pierced with a fork (about 60 minutes).
3. Meanwhile, heat 2 TBS oil in large skillet. When hot, add scallions & sauté (1 1/2 minutes). Mix in garlic & ginger - set pan aside off the heat.
4. When squash is cool enough to handle, gently scoop flesh from shells (reserving the shells) - add it to the scallions along with salt & pepper. Mix well, stirring till squash flesh & scallions are well combined but mixture is still chunky. Fill reserved shells with mixture.
5. In a small bowl, lightly mix breadcrumbs with remaining 1-1/2 TBS oil - sprinkle mixture over the stuffed squash. Arrange squash halves on a cookie sheet & place in the 400° F oven for about 20 minutes (a little longer if stuffing is cool). The crumb mixture on top should be nicely browned - if not, place squash under a hot broiler for a few minutes.
6. Cut each squash half in half again & serve 1 piece per person.

Note: The skin of shell of the squash is edible.