

## Roasted Butternut Squash and Pear Soup

Chef Waldy Malouf, Beacon Restaurant & Bar, NYC

Waldy Malouf started an Eat Local revolution back in 1996 when he was chef and partner at the Hudson River Club in Manhattan, where he sourced many of his ingredients from the Hudson Valley – the man was definitely ahead of the curve. He went on to write a cookbook about it and continues his support of local farmers at his current midtown Manhattan restaurant BEACON. Waldy has also generously hosted Glynwood's Harvest Award luncheon for the past 3 years. When I tasted this soup at the 2007 lunch, I immediately asked him for this recipe!

-- GERALYN DELANEY GRAHAM

Serves 6 to 8

1 large butternut squash (about 3 pounds), peeled, seeded and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Coarse sea salt or kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 leeks, white and light green parts only, cleaned and sliced

2 Bosc pears, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces

1/2 cup white wine

1/4 cup brandy

7 cups chicken or vegetable broth (low-sodium if canned) or water

1 large sprig fresh thyme plus additional leaves for garnish

1-inch piece ginger root, peeled and grated

1/4 cup crème fraîche or sour cream, for garnish (optional)

1 tablespoon chopped crystallized ginger, for garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Place the squash and carrots in a roasting pan large enough to hold them in one layer (or use 2), and toss with the oil and salt and pepper. Roast for 10 minutes, then add the leeks and pears. Toss to combine and continue to roast for another 30 minutes, until the vegetables are tender and browned.
2. Remove the pan from the oven and immediately add the wine and brandy, using a wooden spoon to scrape the vegetables and their caramelized juices from the sides and bottom of the pan. Transfer the vegetables and liquid to a large soup pot. Pour in the broth or water—adding additional water if necessary to cover the vegetables by 1 inch. Add the thyme sprig and grated ginger root and bring the liquid to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, partially covered, for 1 hour.
3. Remove the thyme sprig and puree the soup either with an immersion blender, or in batches in a blender or food processor. Transfer the soup to a medium mesh sieve set over another pot. Use a rubber spatula to press the solids through the sieve. If the soup seems too thick, thin it with a little water. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Just before serving, warm the soup over low heat. Serve in warmed bowls, drizzled with crème fraiche or sour cream, if desired, and garnished with the crystallized ginger and a sprinkling of fresh thyme leaves.