

# COOKING AT REN

November 30, 2011

## Butternut Squash Soup With Fennel, Creme Fraiche and Pumpkin Seeds

2 lbs Butternut Squash  
2 medium bulbs  
4 Tbl extra-virgin olive oil  
2 teaspoons fennel seeds  
4 Tbl unsalted butter  
2 cups onions  
1 Tbl thyme leaves  
2 chiles de arbol  
1 bay leaf  
3/4 sherry  
10 cups chicken or vegetable  
stock or water  
1/4 cup creme fraiche or yogurt  
Candied Pumpkin seeds  
Salt and Pepper

### Directions

Preheat Oven to 400

Cut the squash in half  
lengthwise and remove seeds.  
Place squash cut side down  
and use peeler or sharp knife  
to remove peel. Slice in 1 inch  
thick pieces. Cut the fennel in  
half lengthwise and then into  
1/2 thick pieces.

Toss the squash and fennel in  
olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and  
some fresh ground pepper.  
Place vegetables on baking  
sheet and roast for 35 minutes,

until tender and slightly  
caramelized.

Meanwhile toast the fennel  
seeds in a small pan heat for 2  
to 3 mins until seeds release  
aroma and lightly browned  
pound in a mortar or spice  
grinder.

Heat a stockpot over heat for  
2 mins. Add the butte, and  
when it foams, add the onions,  
fennel seeds, thyme, chiles,  
bay leaf, 1 tea salt and fresh  
ground pepper. Reduce the  
heat to medium-high, and  
cook about 10 min until  
onions are soft and  
translucent, and starting to  
color.

Add the squash and fennel,  
and stir to coat with the  
onions for a minute. Turn the  
heat back up to high and pour  
in the sherry. Let it reduce for  
a min and add the stock and 1  
Tbl of salt. Bring to a boil,  
turn down the heat and  
simmer 20 mins.

Strain the soup in a colander  
set in a pot. Put 1/3 of the  
solids into blender with 1/2  
cup of the broth. Process  
until the mixture is pureed.  
Add another 1/2 cup of broth

and continue to pour in more  
liquid. Blend until soup is  
very smooth and creamy.  
Transfer and repeat with rest  
of ingredients. Taste for  
seasoning.

Pour Soup into bowls and  
spoon some of the creme  
fraiche in center and scatter  
pumpkin seeds over the top.

### Candied pumpkin seeds

1/4 teaspoon cumin seeds  
2 teaspoons unsalted butter  
1/2 cup raw pumpkin seeds  
1 Tbl sugar  
pinch of cinnamon, paprika,  
cayenne pepper  
1 tea honey

Toast cumin seeds and crush  
in mortar or spice grinder

Melt butter in the pan. Add  
the seeds and sugar sprinkle  
with spices and pinch of salt.  
Toss seeds to coat them well  
with the butter and cook for a  
few minutes until they pop  
and color slightly  
Turn off the heat and wait 30  
seconds. Add the honey,  
tossing well to coat the seeds.  
Spread on a plate and let  
them cool.

## Caramelized Onion Crostini With Goat Cheese, Pickled raisins

1 small baguette sliced into 1/4 inch pieces

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

2 large vidalia onion or yellow onions

4 Tbl butter

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Brush both sides of the toasts with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Toast in the oven for 5 minutes, then flip over and toast for another 5 minutes or until the bread is crisp. To make the caramelized vidalia onions, slice the onions into very thin half moons. Melt the butter in a saute pan over medium heat and add all the onions at once. Season with salt and pepper.

The onions will decrease in volume considerably as they cook. Stir frequently until the onions are a deep brown color and have a very sweet onion flavor. Remove from the heat and allow the onions to cool to room temperature.

To assemble the crostini, spread about a 1 teaspoon of caramelized onions on the toast. top with 1 rounded teaspoon of the cheese mixture and then sprinkle a few pickled raisins on top of that.

### Goat Cheese

4 oz goat cheese

1 1/2 Tbl Olive Oil

Place the goat cheese in a bowl of a standing mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or a metal bowl with a hand mixer

On medium speed, begin to whip the cheese until creamy.

With the mixer running, slowly drizzle in the 1 1/2 Tbl of olive oil along with a pinch of salt and pepper.

### Pickled Golden Raisins

2 tea yellow mustard seed

1/2 cup sugar

3 Tbl champagne vinegar

1 chile de arbol crumbled

1 bay leaf

5 oz golden raisins

1 tea thyme leaves

1 inch sprig rosemary

1 tea salt

Place the mustard seeds in a small pan over meduim heat,

and toast for a few mins, shaking the pan often until the seeds just start to pop.

Combine the mustard seeds the 1 cup water and rest of the ingredients in a small nonaluminum pot.

Bring to a boil, and turn the heat down to a low simmer. Cook 6 - 8 mins, until liquad is reduced by half. Let the raisins cool, and store them in the liquid in the fridge

## Salmon in a Couscous Crust

1/2 bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped  
 1/2 cup golden raisins, coarsely chopped  
 3 tablespoons coarsely chopped green olives  
 2 tablespoons capers, chopped  
 3 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted and coarsely chopped  
 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling  
 1 lemon, juiced  
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
 1 1/2 cups couscous (see note)  
 2 (6-ounce) salmon fillets skinned  
 2 cups water

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 F.

In a large bowl, stir together the parsley, raisins, olives, capers, pine nuts, olive oil, and lemon juice and season with salt and pepper; stir in the couscous to moisten completely and season generously with salt and pepper.

Put the salmon in a single layer in a smallish buttered gratin dish or baking dish (bottom measured 10 by 7 1/4 inches; 2.8 liter); the fillets should not touch one another. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and drizzle

with a little olive oil. Now spoon the couscous mixture over the top of the fish so that it completely covers them and fills in the whole dish at the same time.

Pour over the water. Drizzle with olive oil. Put the dish in the oven and bake 25 minutes. Use a large spoon to spoon out the salmon and the couscous.

## Braised Baby Bok Choy

8 baby bok choy, trimmed, and halved lengthwise if large  
 1 Tablespoon of Olive Oil  
 1/4 cup chicken stock or water  
 Salt and Pepper

### Directions

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking. Add bok choy, and cook, turning once, until just beginning to turn golden, about 2 minutes. Add stock and cover;

reduce heat to medium, and simmer until bok choy is tender, about 5 minutes. Transfer bok choy to a serving platter. If using chicken stock reserve the cooking liquid in skillet.

Cook liquid over medium-high heat until it is reduced by half, 1 to 2 minutes and pour over bok choy.

# Apple Cake

## With Cinnamon Cream

1 ¼ cups sugar  
 2 eggs  
 1 fresh vanilla bean  
 ½ cup whole milk  
 1 stick butter  
 5 Granny Smith apples  
 2 teaspoons baking powder  
 ½ cup flour

Take a 9-inch square baking pan and wrap the surface completely in tinfoil. Spread butter from the end of a stick all over the surface where the batter will sit. Lightly sprinkle a little bit of flour all over the buttered surface. Put aside for later.

Pour 1 ¼ cups of sugar into a large empty bowl. Crack 2 eggs into the bowl. Whisk vigorously. Split 1 fresh vanilla bean down the middle with a sharp knife. Scrape the insides out with the knife edge, being careful not to scrape off pieces of the husk. Drop the contents of the pod (now on the knife) into the bowl with the sugar and egg mixture. Take the empty pod and place it in a shallow saucepan. Pour a ½ cup of whole milk into the saucepan over the pod. Warm gently on low heat.

Continue whisking the sugar/egg/vanilla mixture until all the sugar is dissolved. This will take a while. The batter should stretch like a ribbon when you pull the whisk out of the bowl. The dry ingredients don't go in the mixture until the last minute. Set the batter aside to rest.

Put 1 stick ( 1/4 pound) of butter into a sauce pan. Leave it to melt slowly over medium heat. Peel, quarter, and core 5 Granny Smith apples. Immediately slice the apple quarters using the ceramic slicer. Return to the batter. Whisk while slowly adding the melted butter, then whisk vigorously. Remove the vanilla bean halves from the milk mixture. Slowly pour the milk into the batter while whisking. The batter texture should be a bit "loosey-goosey" and feel somewhat thin.

Add 2 teaspoons of organic baking powder to the batter while whisking. Continue whisking while adding ½ cup of the Farina flour. Whisk well. The mixture will get slightly thicker but still flow very easily.

Dump the apple slices into the mixture. (Don't squeeze any water out of the apples.) Mix together gently so as not to break up the apples. You need just enough batter to bind the apples together. About 2 to 1 ratio of apple to batter.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Bake until cooked through and through—roughly 80 to 90 minutes. To test whether the cake is done, put a knife in the middle periodically when you think it's ready. When the knife comes out clean, the cake should be ready. Touch the blade carefully to your lip to check that the inside of the cake is hot.

When the cake is done, remove it from the oven and lay the cake still in the pan on a rack so air circulates above and below the pan to cool the cake. After a couple of minutes the cake will start to recede a little bit from the sides—sink and shrink. Go around the edge of the cake with a knife to help it completely recede from the sides of the pan

Gently lift the cake out of the pan by holding onto the tinfoil edges. After cooling, the cake should have shrunken a bit, making it easier to remove. Once removed, trim off the excess tinfoil with scissors or a knife. Cut off centimeter-thick edges of the cake (these make for yummy snacking because the smell of the cake has probably made you super hungry by now.) Cut the cake into inch-wide strips that go the length of the cake. Remove the tinfoil. Lay the slice of cake on its side on the plate. Generously sprinkle powdered sugar over the cake.

½ cup heavy 40% whipping cream  
 pinch of cinnamon to taste  
 ¼ cup fine powdered sugar

Whisk the heavy cream in a metal bowl. Continue whisking until the cream thickens.

Add cinnamon. Add 1/4 cup fine powdered sugar and continue to whisk.

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## **Cooking At Ren** **Meet The Chef**

Chef Mark Wright dining restaurants cooking is an  
has been cooking in the Chicago experience that  
since his area. He combines anyone can enjoy  
childhood. He his passion for given the right  
received his formal food with his inspiration.  
training from two desire to educate  
renowned culinary and delight with  
programs and has every meal he  
worked at several prepares. His  
restaurants fine philosophy is that