

Curried Red Kuri and Chestnut Soup

Soup is great comfort food on a cold Winter day, sure, but only if “comfort” doesn’t too quickly become “boring.” Shake up your options with different, gorgeous ingredients. Find a red kuri squash at your farmers market or natural food store. The dense, sweet flesh evokes chestnut, so it makes sense to add more of the seasonal favorite. If you can’t find a red kuri, try a kabocha, butternut or acorn squash instead. And the spicy kick at the end of this soup will snap you out of any monotonous rut masquerading as “comfort.”

See Cook’s Notes on prepackaged roasted chestnuts.

Ingredients

1 (3½ to 4 pound) red kuri squash, scrubbed and quartered, seeds discarded
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 (14-ounce) can coconut milk (full-fat, not light), well chilled (see Cook’s Notes)
1 red onion, chopped (a generous cup)
1 cup peeled roasted chestnuts (about one 5-ounce foil packet)
1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger (1-inch long piece) peeled, grated on a fine microplane
2 tablespoons Thai red curry paste
4 cups chicken stock
2 tablespoons roasted and salted pumpkin seeds
1 tablespoon finely sliced chives
1 tablespoon pumpkin seed oil (optional)
Lemon or lime wedges, for serving

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Put the squash quarters, skin side down, on a foil-lined baking sheet. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Roast until very tender and browned in spots, about 45 minutes. Set aside to cool for a bit, then scoop flesh from skin and set aside. You should have about 3 cups of squash.

Spoon the white solid coconut oil, about 2 tablespoons, from the top of the can of coconut milk and heat in a medium Dutch oven or other heavy pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the chestnuts and ginger then cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Add the curry paste and stir another minute, making sure that bottom of pan does not burn. Stir in the squash, mix well to combine, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes.

Add the remaining coconut milk and the chicken stock, mix well, and bring to a simmer over high heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally for 30 minutes. The soup may seem loose at this point, but it will thicken up when it's pureed.

Remove pot from heat. Transfer the soup to a large bowl. Working in batches, carefully puree the soup in a blender until smooth, transferring it back to the pot after blending. Repeat with remaining soup. If you'd like a thinner soup, stir in more coconut milk, hot chicken stock or water. Reheat if necessary and adjust seasonings.

Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with pumpkin seeds and chives. Drizzle with pumpkin seed oil if you like. Serve with lemon or lime wedges.

Cook's Notes

Prepackaged foil packets of small roasted chestnuts can be found in Asian markets. Larger roasted chestnuts in jars can be found in supermarkets during the winter holiday season.

Chill the can of coconut milk overnight, and—don't shake it—when you remove the lid you'll find that some of the fat has thickened or solidified at the top. Skim that off and use it instead of butter or oil.

total time: 2 hours 15 minutes

active prep: 45 minutes

inactive time: 90 minutes

serves: 4 to 6

difficulty: moderate