



Burnt Caramel Squash with Ice Cream

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

- About a quarter of a kabocha squash (You could use another kind of squash but I can't imagine wanting to) - Pumpkin pie spice and some extra ginger (I actually used tea masala, it's pretty similar) - Honey (preferably dark and intense like buckwheat (I used this) or chestnut) - Sugar - Apple cider vinegar - Dark sesame oil (Asian style) - A neutral vegetable oil - Pecans, crushed gently (biggyish chunks) - Ice cream - A pizza stone (optional)

Instructions

I love squash but it is usually kinda gross. You know, all stringy or pureeish or just not possessed of any flavour. So I kinda made this up to take the things I like about squash—its starchy fluffiness, its rich orange flavour, the inescapable feeling of autumn—and make a willows-style dessert out of them. Something that's not too demanding, but looks it. This is just a recipe for the squash topping. Serve it warm on something cold and mild. I'd go with dulce de leche ice cream, or vanilla gelato, in the perfect case, but as pictured I'm using cappuccino ice cream, which as it turns out is fairly delicious. Hypothetically, I think you could make this with less sweeteners, perhaps simply leaving the sugar out, and use bacon fat, for a savory version, served on maybe savory crepes with big crystals of salt? 1. Preheat the oven to like 350F. Put your pizza stone on the middle rack if using, and allow an extra 20 minutes for oven to heat up. 2. Peel and dice the squash. Small cubes! See the photo. You want to be able to get a pecan piece, squash cube, and a bit of ice cream in each spoonful if you can. 3. In a mixing bowl add the squash and say a half- to a whole teaspoon of spice mixture. About a tablespoon of honey, or just enough that you think it might coat the squash, and a splash of vinegar just enough to loosen the honey, just a few drops of sesame oil, and stir it all up so that the spices are evenly distributed and the squash is covered in the glaze. 4. Line a 9"x9" baking pan with foil, going all the way up the sides so you make sort of a disposable pan out of tinfoil. Seriously do this. Burnt caramel is

****not easy to clean.**** Pour in the squash cubes and spread them out in a single layer, then drizzle with your neutral oil a little bit. You don't need a ton, just a tablespoon or so. Oven (on the stone if using) and bake for a while, stirring every 15 minutes or so. 5. The glaze will begin to bubble and darken. While it's still quite liquid, take out the hot pan, stir, then spread out the squash again and sprinkle with sugar. You want to get a good sparkling layer of sugar going here, it'll take a handful or two. I estimate half a cup? Back in the oven to caramelize. Watch it carefully. Eventually the syrup will begin to harden and sizzle in the oil—this is where it gets risky. By this time the squash will be a deep red or mahogany colour, and should be going translucent. When it's as dark as you dare, take it out of the oven and simply lift the foil lining out of the pan. Set this aside somewhere and put your pecans in the still-hot, empty baking pan (which you have towelled dry if any steam has condensed on it). 6. Turn off the oven. 7. Put the nuts in the oven (stone again) and just leave them there to toast in the residual heat until you can smell them. Then pour them over the cooling squash, put your pan liner thingy in the baking pan again for stability, and stir it all up. The remains of the caramel and oil should glaze the pecans nicely.