

626 ON ROOD – MODERN CUISINE AND WINE BAR

Japanese Pumpkin, Vanilla, and Garlic Soup

Makes 1 gallon

2 small Japanese Pumpkins (Kabocha squash)
¾ cup maple syrup
1/3 cup peeled garlic cloves
1-3 cups water
1½ tablespoons vanilla extract
2 teaspoons fine sea salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 cups heavy cream
Pomegranate seeds and fried sage leaves for garnish.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Line baking sheet with baking paper or foil. Cut Japanese pumpkins in half and remove seeds and membranes. Place cut side down on prepared baking sheet and place in oven. Bake until pumpkin is extremely tender, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove from oven and allow to cool to room temperature.

Meanwhile, place maple syrup and garlic cloves in small heavy saucepan over very low heat. "Sweat" garlic cloves until soft, about 20 minutes. **Do not let garlic brown.** Remove from heat and allow to cool to room temperature.

When pumpkin has cooled, pull skins from pumpkin, discard skins. Place ¼ of cooked pumpkin into a blender, long with ¼ of the maple syrup – garlic mixture. Turn the blender on medium. Add just enough water to get the pumpkin moving in the blender. Increase blender speed to high and puree, stopping the blender and scraping down the sides of the beaker often. Remove pumpkin – garlic mixture from blender and, working in batches repeat with remaining cooked pumpkin and maple – garlic mixture.

Combine all pumpkin – garlic mixture in a Dutch oven or large, heavy saucepan. Stir in vanilla extract, sea salt, black pepper, and heavy cream. Bring soup to a simmer. Allow to simmer for 20 minutes, stirring often and adjusting seasoning as necessary.

Pour into soup bowls and garnish with pomegranate seeds and crumbled fried sage leaves. Serve immediately.