

Inspired by Gracie Allen Butternut Squash Macaroni and Cheese

*Courtesy of **In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens***

If you want to use cream instead of evaporated milk in this recipe, please do; I love cream! The evaporated milk was actually quite tasty, however.

The squash gives the dish a lovely color, a delicate flavor, and a remarkably smooth consistency.

Ingredients:

1 small to medium butternut squash, cut into 1-inch cubes
2 cloves garlic, minced
several sprigs of sage, cut into small pieces
olive oil, salt, and pepper as needed
3/4 cup water
1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg
1 cup evaporated milk, plus up to 3/4 cup more as needed (if you're making the dish with cream, use plain milk for the additional moisture)
a generous dash of cayenne pepper
1 pound pasta, cooked according to package directions (I used wagon wheels because I find them entertaining and not too big to handle)
3 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese (or to taste)
several sprinkles of paprika

Instructions:

In a Dutch oven at moderate temperature (350 degrees), roast the squash pieces uncovered, garlic, and sage in the olive oil, adding salt and pepper generously.

When the squash begins to soften, pour the water into the dish and stir. Cover and continue to cook until the squash softens completely. The cooking time should take somewhere between 30 minutes and 1 hour, depending on the age and density of your squash.

Remove the pot from the oven and allow it to cool for a few minutes. (Leave the oven on.) Carefully ladle the solids and liquids into a food processor or electric mixer, and mix until smooth. Mix in the nutmeg, 3/4 cup evaporated milk, and cayenne.

Grease a 2- to 3-quart casserole dish, and combine the cooked pasta and most of the cheese in it. Stir in the squash mixture. Your dish should be moist but not swimming in liquid. If it is not moist enough, add more milk. Top with the remaining cheese and the paprika.

Bake for half an hour. Serves 8 to 12.