

First Try Butternut Squash Pizza

Courtesy of *In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens*

Ingredients:

extra-virgin olive oil as needed for sautéing and roasting
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 onion, finely diced
1-1/4 pounds butternut squash (cut into chunks)
salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon cumin seed (I will increase this next time!)
1 teaspoon chili powder (ditto)
3/4 cup water
more water or cream to thin the squash as needed (I used a couple of tablespoons of cream, but I think water would do as well)
1 pizza crust
grated extra-sharp cheddar cheese as needed (I used about 1-1/2 cups)
1/2 bell pepper, cored and cut into thin strips (I used a yellow pepper because I had it, but green or red would make a prettier contrast with the squash.)

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. If your pizza dough is refrigerated, take it out of the fridge so it can come to room temperature while you are doing the rest of the work.

Place a Dutch oven on the stove top, and heat a couple of tablespoons of oil in it. Toss in the onion and garlic and sauté until they begin to brown.

Toss in the squash, salt and pepper, and seasonings, and stir to coat the squash with spices and oil. (Add a little more oil if necessary.)

Place the pan in the oven, uncovered, and cook for 20 minutes, stirring from time to time. Stir in the water and continue to cook, covered, until the squash is very soft—about 1/2 hour longer.

Remove the pan from the oven, and mash the squash and remaining water together. Preheat the oven as indicated in your pizza dough instructions.

Mash in a little liquid to make the squash puree spreadable. Next, roll and/or stretch the pizza dough out gently (this may take a few tries) so that it forms a 14-inch circle (or a rectangle to go onto a cookie sheet if you don't have a pizza pan). Use a little flour to help with this if necessary.

Spray your pan lightly with cooking spray and oil it even more lightly. Place the dough on the pan. Spread a very thin film of olive oil on top. Spread the squash puree on top of the crust, and top that with the grated cheese. Arrange the pieces of pepper onto the cheese topping.

Bake the pizza until the cheese is nicely melted and the bottom of the crust turns golden brown. With my crust (from Trader Joe's) and my oven this took about 20 minutes.

If you are using a thicker pizza crust, you may want to cook the crust a bit before you spread the toppings on so that the pizza cooks all the way through. Serves 4 to 6.