

A Creamy Soup for a New (Healthy) Year

by Sue Doeden



As the New Year begins, it only seems right to offer a recipe for a soup that is chock full of vegetables and even a little bit of fruit. The creamy soup will incorporate nicely into a regime of healthful menus.

I've been making this soup for years. A long time ago, much longer than I'd like to admit, I joined a group of women once a month for a Sunday afternoon meal. We called it our Recipe Exchange Group. We would each prepare a part of the meal and bring along the recipe to share. Elsa, our friend from Argentina, brought this soup to one of those long-ago meals where we'd not only eat, but also chat about our kids, our husbands, and food. It was an appreciated outlet for all of us in this small group of moms who liked to cook.

If you have made a resolution to eat more fruits and vegetables each day, this soup will make it easy. There is a fair amount of chopping involved, but once that task has been accomplished, the soup will be ready to eat in no time.

Chopped leeks, onion and celery saute in butter until tender. Be sure the butter is nice and hot when you add the vegetables. You should be able to hear them sizzle in the hot butter. I typically use butternut squash in the soup. This time, though, I had some other kind of winter squash on hand — a big green one that I picked up at the farmers market in the Fall. Use your favorite winter squash. A small turnip adds a very mild cabbage-like flavor, but it's hardly detectable after it cooks with all the other fruit and vegetables. Apples and carrots add sweetness, along with a little apple juice. I use local orchard-fresh apple cider when I make this soup in the Fall. The secret ingredient is added just at the end. Shredded Gruyere. Just 2 ounces melts into the soup and offers an amazing flavor that no one can figure out. Taste the

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soup before adding the cheese and once again after the cheese has incorporated into the soup. You'll never want to make the soup without Gruyere. If you've never eaten Gruyere cheese, it's a semi-soft Swiss cheese with a nutty, slightly sweet and salty flavor. It's a good melting cheese and is often used in fondue.

You decide whether or not to add 1/2 cup of heavy whipping cream before serving the soup. I usually leave it out, unless I'm planning to serve the soup at a dinner party. The cream adds rich, silky texture to the soup, but it also adds fat and calories.

I am one who will be focusing on daily doses of more fruits and vegetables than I have consumed in 2011. I'll continue my daily walks with Gracie, my golden retriever. I promise to go to yoga classes more consistently. I'm going to eat little meat and when I do I will prefer organic or locally-produced meat. I'm going to start the year being vegan one day a week, consuming no food that comes from animals. I'll see how that goes. And, I'm going to eat more greens, a wide variety of greens. And, I'm going to try to always have some of this soup in the freezer.

Happy New Year. May it be a healthy one for you and all those you love.

Apple-Butternut Squash Soup

2 medium-sized leeks
1 medium onion, chopped
1/2 cup chopped celery
3 tablespoons butter
1 pound butternut or your favorite winter squash, peeled, seeds removed, and chopped
1 small turnip, peeled and chopped
2 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and chopped
1/2 cup chopped carrot
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 cup apple cider or organic apple juice
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon dried whole rosemary, crushed
1/4 teaspoon dried whole sage, crushed
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/2 cup (2 ounces) shredded Gruyere cheese

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1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
Croutons, optional

Remove root, tough outer leaves, and tops from leeks, leaving 2 inches of dark leaves. Wash leeks, and chop.

Saute leeks, onion, and celery in 3 tablespoons butter in a large Dutch oven until vegetables are tender. Add squash, apples, turnip, carrots, and chicken broth, stirring to combine. Bring mixture to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Puree soup mixture in blender to make it smooth. It will take a few batches in the blender. Add apple cider, salt, pepper, nutmeg, rosemary and sage to one of the batches of soup in the blender to puree. Put pureed soup back into pot. Stir well. Simmer soup, uncovered, 10 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Add shredded cheese and whipping cream, stirring until cheese melts. Ladle soup into individual serving bowls. Garnish with croutons, if desired.
Yield: 12 cups.

Tip from the cook

If you think of it when you are cleaning the leeks, save some of the thin, slender pieces from the middle of the leek to use as garnish on the soup.

Sue Doeden is a food writer based in Bemidji, Minn. Her columns, recipes and photos appear weekly in select Forum Communications Co. newspapers. She also appears on Lakeland Public Television's Wednesday newscast at 10 p.m., and teaches cooking classes. Her recipes can be found online on her blog [Sue Doeden's All about Food](#).