

Kabocha Squash Gnocchi (and a few suggested preparations)

I was pleasantly surprised when this recipe came together. Gnocchi, traditionally made with potato, requires a delicate balance of dry starch and moisture. Typically, potatoes are baked, then passed through a food mill or potato ricer (essential step often overlooked) which converts large potato chunks into smaller pieces without compression, ensuring that the output is something light and fluffy rather than dense and gummy. In the past I've used sweet potato but was met with difficulties in that sweet potatoes contain more fiber and thus when roasted will secrete more water (fiber often holds water). Kabocha squash when not over cooked, will retain a bit of starchiness that lends itself well to gnocchi preparation. The key is not to over roast the squash- roasting it until just tender enough to stick a knife through easily. If you have not made gnocchi before, I highly recommend watching a youtube video outlining the technique for forming the dough and shaping the gnocchi, it's much more descriptive than reading. Some recs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRmPcaGAGOs>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unAOVy92a_8

Notice how both instructors work with the gnocchi dough very gently- this is key to ensuring light texture.

Gnocchi making is a process and will require a large space to work on. Meant to be cooked and enjoyed instantly, gnocchi can also be frozen for later use. To do this, be sure that the gnocchi are in a single layer and well dusted with flour before freezing. After frozen, you may combine into a container for easier storage

Kabocha squash gnocchi prepared two ways:

- 1) **Brown butter sage with cured egg yolk (or sharp cheese)**
- 2) **Mustard and mushroom butter sauce with pinenuts**

For the Gnocchi

1 small kabocha squash ~1.5 lb (or half a large ~3 lbs) roasted (about 750 g)

~1 cup (150g) all purpose flour

10 g kosher salt

1 tsp coriander

1 tsp black pepper

2 large eggs whisked

Cut the kabocha squash in half, scoop out the seeds and inner 'guts' and place cut side down on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 for 45 minutes – 1 hour, or until a knife easily pierces the side and comes out clean (ie. doesn't bring the squash with it). Remove from oven and allow to cool for at least 15 minutes. Using a spoon, scoop out the flesh from the squash into a bowl. Using a potato ricer or food mill, pass the squash through into another bowl. Add in the whisked eggs, coriander, salt, pepper, and sifted flour. Using a fork, mix the ingredients until somewhat combined, then use your hands to fold together the remaining bits into a cohesive ball. When ready to form cut off a piece of dough no bigger than a fist (probably a half is easier), sprinkle flour on the working surface, and roll out into a log, applying light pressure in the center and working towards the edges to extend the log (to me the final product looks like a snake). Once the log is elongated and has a diameter of about an inch, cut off small 1-inch wide pieces and with a lightly floured finger press a small indent into the gnocchi. Repeat this process with all of the dough, placing the final pieces onto a well-floured sheet pan. Sprinkle with flour and freeze (if storing) or use immediately.

Unfrozen gnocchi take about 3-4 minutes to cook in boiling water. They will float when done.

For preparation 1 (brown butter sage):

Heat a medium small skillet over medium high heat for 3-4 minutes. Drop in 2 tbsp of butter and immediately drop the heat to low (the butter should melt, sizzle and take on some color). Add in 4-5 chopped sage leaves, and a few turns of cracked pepper. Add in about 10 freshly cooked gnocchi, along with 2 tbsp of cooking liquid. Add in a tbsp or so of fresh parsley, cook the gnocchi over medium heat until the liquid evaporates. Serve in a bowl and grate generously some cured egg yolk or sharp aged cheese. Some chili oil over top is also nice if you like spice

For preparation 2 (mustard mushroom pine nuts)

Heat a pan over medium heat, add in 2 tbsp of butter or olive oil, and 1 clove of chopped garlic. When 10 gnocchi are finished boiling, add in 2 tbsp of cooking liquid, 1 tsp of Dijon mustard, 1 tsp or so of dried

porcini (or any tasty fungus) powder, 2-3 tbsp of pine nuts and the gnocchi. Cook for 3-4 minutes or until the liquid is mostly evaporated. Top with finely grated cheese of choice.