

HONEY

When we talk about what's in season during the autumn months, we usually think in terms of fruits and vegetables. Let's not forget that this is also prime time for honey. Try to purchase your honey directly from local honey producers who are selling their products at farm stands and farmers' markets, to ensure you're getting a 100-percent-local product.

I developed this cake by adapting two family recipes for honey cake. The first came to me from my beloved grandmother, Debbie Chodos, who baked it for the High Holidays and year-round when I was growing up. The second comes from my dear mother-in-law, Sheila Oliver, whose recipe was handed down from her mother.

A HONEY OF A CAKE A FAMILY TRADITION

From Gail Gordon Oliver

This cake becomes even more flavourful the day after it's baked.

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp allspice
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup strong brewed coffee, cooled
- 1 cup liquid honey
- 1/2 cup raisins + 1 tbsp all-purpose flour (optional)

In medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, ground ginger and allspice; set aside. In large bowl, beat together eggs and sugar until fluffy. Gradually beat in oil, coffee and honey.

Add one-third of flour mixture to the batter, mixing until just combined. Repeat with remaining flour mixture. If using raisins, coat lightly with the flour, shaking off excess, and stir into batter.

Pour batter into greased and floured 9-inch tube pan or bundt pan. Bake in centre of 350°F oven until top of cake springs back when lightly touched, or a toothpick inserted into centre of cake comes out clean, about 55 to 65 minutes.

Let cool on rack for 10 minutes before removing from pan.

ROASTED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

From Gail Gordon Oliver

This soup is wonderfully satisfying on a cool autumn day or all through the winter months. This is a thick purée of butternut squash and pumpkin, delicately scented with nutmeg and thyme. Roasting the squash intensifies its flavour as it softens and caramelizes in the oven.

8 servings

- 1 whole butternut squash (about 3 to 4 lbs), peeled, seeded and cut into ¾-inch chunks
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp kosher salt
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 3 medium carrots, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1/4 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme (tied together with kitchen twine) **or** ¼ tsp dried thyme leaves
- 6 cups reduced sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth
- 1 14 oz can pure pumpkin purée (unsweetened)
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- Whipping cream, to taste (optional)

In large bowl, combine butternut squash, 2 tbsp of the oil, and 1/2 tsp of the salt. Spread in a single layer on baking sheet. Bake in 425°F oven until squash is lightly browned and tender, about 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, in large stockpot, heat remaining 2 tbsp of the oil at medium heat and cook the onions, stirring often until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the carrots and celery and cook, stirring often, about 5 minutes. Stir in the nutmeg and thyme. Add the broth, pumpkin purée, remaining 1-1/2 tsp salt and the pepper. Stir to combine. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium low, cover and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes.

Add roasted squash to stockpot. Stir well. Return to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes. If using fresh thyme, remove stems. Puree the soup using a handheld blender, or in batches using a countertop blender. Return puréed soup to pot. Simmer for an additional 10 minutes. Add whipping cream to taste, if using.

Note: If you find the soup to be too thick after it has finished cooking, you can add additional broth to thin it out a bit. Adjust seasonings if necessary.