

CHEESE TORTILLA SOUP

This recipe was served at the family Thanksgiving dinner in 1988 where there were several students from University of Notre Dame in attendance, in town for the USC-ND football game the next day. The soup was a new experience to their eastern palates, but was well appreciated at the time and talked of for many years, we are told. When served more recently at a Christmas progressive dinner, one of the guests enjoyed it so much he referred to it as an "epicurean orgasm".

1 shallot, small minced finely
 1 clove garlic minced finely
 1 tsp cooking oil
 2 cups chicken stock
 2 corn tortillas cut up
 20 leaves fresh cilantro, minced
 1 tsp mild chile powder
 1 tbsp mild green chile, chopped canned
 chile is preferred here
 ¼ lb mild Mexican Velveeta[®], in 1" cubes
 1 tsp cornstarch dissolved in a little water

Sauté the shallot and garlic in the cooking oil until the shallot is limp and just beginning to brown. Add everything else except the cornstarch, bring to a boil, and let simmer, stirring as needed not to stick to the pot, about 15 minutes until the tortilla breaks apart and thickens. Add the cornstarch dissolved in a little cold water until the desired consistency is reached. You may want to adjust the seasoning, especially the chile powder to suit your taste. If you want it hotter, add ground cayenne chile or Scotch Bonnet until your palate is pleased. We New Mexico-bred outlanders prefer a little more heat than most others find tolerable.

Serves 2 meal-size portions.

NEW MEXICO CHEESE AND SQUASH SOUP

A New Mexico squash soup will have squash, onions, garlic, cheese, and green chile in it, right? But that's about the extent of the similarity between this soup and Nacho Squash Soup also found among these pages¹.

1 tbsp olive oil
 ½ medium onion, diced
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 lager beer
 1 pint chicken stock
 1 butternut squash, peeled and diced
 ½ tsp ground oregano
 ½ tsp ground cumin
 1 tsp tomato bouillon powder or cube
 1 chipotle bouillon cube
 2 tbsp onion soup mix
 1 (4-oz) can mild green chiles
 "salt" and pepper, to taste
 ½ lb cheddar, grated
 1 oz medium sherry wine
 ½ cup cilantro, chopped

In a stock pot, cook the onion and garlic in the oil until softened. Add in all the remaining ingredients, except for the cheese and cilantro, and bring to a simmer. Let simmer, stirring occasionally, until the squash is very soft. Using a stick blender, liquefy the pot contents off the heat. Return to low heat and fold in the cheese, stirring constantly until melted and incorporated.

Remove from the heat, stir in the cilantro, and add the sherry. Serve with toasted garlic bread.

¹Nacho Squash Soup, page 71.