

Creamy Butternut Squash Soup with Bacon

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*6 slices bacon
1 bag (10 ounce) frozen
seasoning blend vegetables
2 (6 cups) fresh butternut
squash, diced
2 teaspoons dried thyme
leaves
3 tablespoons flour
1 carton (32 ounce) chicken
stock (or broth)
2 tablespoons fresh chives,
chopped
4 ounces spreadable garlic-
herb cream cheese
1 teaspoon Kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground red
pepper (optional)*

Place the bacon in a large saucepan on medium.

Cook for 7 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until crispy. Transfer the bacon to paper towels to drain, leaving four tablespoons of fat in the pan. Add the seasoning blend to the bacon fat. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly softened. Add the butternut squash and the thyme. Cook for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the squash begins to soften.

Stir in the flour until fully incorporated. Cook for 1 minute. Stir in the stock and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low. Cover and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes until the squash is tender when pierced with a fork.

Meanwhile, crumble the bacon and chop the chives. Puree the squash mixture using an immersion blender (or let the soup cool for about 15 minutes and blend in batches) until smooth. Stir in the cheese, salt, pepper and red pepper (if using) until the cheese is melted.

Divide the soup evenly among serving bowls. Garnish each bowl with crumbled bacon and chives.

Serve.

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 309 Calories; 19g Fat (56.2% calories from fat); 14g Protein; 19g Carbohydrate; 1g Dietary Fiber; 32mg Cholesterol; 2487mg Sodium. Exchanges: 1 Grain(Starch); 1 1/2 Lean Meat; 0 Vegetable; 2 1/2 Fat.