



# Local Fall Vegetables

**W**e try year round to keep our menus as local as possible. Customers expect this, but it is a challenge. There are some hot house products available, but here in the Northeast, it is necessary to rethink our ingredients every month.

It is good to source some local fall and winter produce, or at least feature some items which will grow in this area on a menu. You don't have to give up on fresh vegetables during the cold months. It is possible to find good winter storage vegetables that are not only fresh, but delicious and very useful with a little imagination. Items such as sweet potatoes, chestnuts, parsnips, carrots, onions and garlic can be used in a myriad of ways to create unique and interesting menu options. Winter squashes have a reputation of being dull and boring vegetables, but this does not have to be the case. You may expand your horizons to include these great winter vegetables and have your customers asking for more.

One of the simplest variations on a good vegetable side dish is "Roasted Fall Vegetables". You start by collecting a variety of storage vegetables, including sweet potatoes, carrots, potatoes, Diakon radishes, turnips, and parsnips. Clean them well and peel. Cut each into different shapes, large dice, Julienne,

discs, but keep them rather large. With the right ratio of vegetables a very colorful mixture may be developed. Toss in some olive oil, salt and pepper, and a generous number of whole garlic cloves. Roast very hot for probably 45 minutes, turning regularly, to get some good brown color. This dish can be stored in the cooler for several days. To reheat, place in a very hot oven to crisp the edges and adjust the seasonings before service.



It is worth noting that there are a lot of vegetables which will grow well into the cold weather. Any vegetable of the cabbage family, which include broccoli, radishes, collards and turnips, will produce greens that will take a pretty hard frost. There are many lettuces which last well into December around here. Of course the root vegetables, like carrots, or radishes, have an extended life.

Here are two recipes that will work all winter long. Pumpkin Pie is very popular, but it is considered a seasonal dish. Sweet Potato Pie, however, is considered a Southern specialty treat, and can be sold year round, in the same style. The Butternut Squash Soup is different in that it is a savory soup, not the usual sweet variety. In fact you can make this soup pretty darn hot, the squash will balance off some serious hot pepper.

# SWEET POTATO PIE

Makes 4 x 10" pies, or 32 portions

8 large Sweet Potatoes (enough to make 6 cups of mashed sweet potatoes)  
4 each 10" pie crusts  
1/2 pound Dry Beans  
8 large Sweet Potatoes  
1/2 pound Butter  
8 each Eggs  
2 cups Sugar  
2 cups Brown Sugar  
6 cups Evaporated Milk  
1 Tbsp Pure Vanilla Extract  
2 tsp Nutmeg  
2 tsp Cinnamon  
1 tsp Ginger

Bake off the sweet potatoes in a hot oven, about 350°F until they are very soft. Allow to cool and peel. Put the (baked) insides in a mixing bowl and mash very well or until they are very smooth. Either make up fresh pie dough or buy some frozen pie dough. If using frozen allow them to thaw a little and crimp the edges to make them look more homemade. With either type of dough, with the dough in the pie tin, poke the bottom a few times with a fork. Cover with some parchment paper lightly, press it down on the dough, and cover with some dry beans to weigh down the paper. Bake at 375°F for about 10 minutes then remove the paper and continue to bake for another 5 minutes. The shell should be fully baked, but very light.

In a large mixing bowl or in a mixer, cream the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add the sweet potatoes and then the rest of the ingredients a little at a time. Make sure to turn off the mixer and scrape down the bowl several times in order to completely mix the filling.

Divide the filling into the pie shells and smooth out nicely. Bake at 400°F for about 15 minutes. At this point turn down the oven to 350°F and continue to bake for an additional 30 to 40 minutes. Rotate the pies occasionally so they will bake evenly. The pies are done when they will no longer shake like Jello, or when a toothpick comes out clean. Try not to over-bake.

Serve chilled with whipped cream.

# SPICY BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Makes about 3 gallons, or 30 portions

1 pound Onions, diced  
8 oz Celery, diced  
8 oz Carrots, peeled and diced  
4 oz Butter  
6 each Fresh Butternut Squash  
2 gallons Chicken or vegetable stock  
1 oz Crushed red pepper  
2 quart Half and half or milk  
to taste Salt and white pepper  
1 oz Tabasco Sauce  
1 pound Onions, thin slice  
1 quart Sour Cream

Sweat the mirepoix in butter until soft, allow no color. Peel and seed the squash. Roast and salt the seeds and reserve for later. Reserve one of the diced squash. Cook this reserved squash in salted water until just barely cooked. Cool and refrigerate.

Add the diced squash unreserved into the mirepoix and cover with broth. Season slightly and add some crushed red pepper. Bring to a boil and allow to simmer for about 15 minutes or until the squash is cooked. Cool a little and then puree and strain the soup. Reserve this for a reheat.

Dust the sliced onions lightly with flour and frizzle in hot oil. Reserve.

For service, heat the soup with about a third by volume of milk or half and half. Correct the seasonings and add Tabasco Sauce to your taste. Add some diced cooked butternut squash and heat well. Serve in a large bowl with a dollop of sour cream, some roasted and salted seeds and frizzled onions.