



SQUASH

Lobster with Hokkaido Squash Soup and Brown Butter

Serves 4

Lobster and squash are already a superb combination, but this interpretation, with its textural and flavor notes of citrus, apple, and watercress, reaches a higher level. Peppery watercress provides a magnificent contrast, cutting through the sweeter components. Star anise is lightly dusted over the lobster meat and soup for just the right hint of exoticism.

SOUP

- 1 Hokkaido squash, halved and seeds removed
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon ground star anise
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon butter

BROWN BUTTER

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter

LOBSTER

- 4 small lobster tails, cooked and cut into $\frac{1}{3}$ -inch-thick medallions
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons brown butter (above)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

GARNISH

- 24 stems watercress, thick stems trimmed away
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup small-diced water chestnuts
- 2 tablespoons small-diced Granny Smith apple
- 1 orange, peeled, supremed, and segments cut into thirds
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground star anise

METHOD

To prepare the soup: Preheat the oven to 375°F. Rub the inside of the squash with the olive oil and star anise; season with salt and pepper. Place cut side down in an ovenproof pan and add 1 cup of the water. Roast the squash for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, or until tender. Remove the pulp from the skin and purée the pulp in a blender with the remaining 2 cups water, the orange juice, and the vinegar until smooth. If the soup is too thick, add additional orange juice and water. Transfer the soup to a saucepan and warm over medium heat; whisk in the butter and season to taste with salt and pepper.

To prepare the brown butter: Place the butter in a small saucepan and melt over medium-low heat. Continue to simmer the butter slowly, allowing the milk solids to rise to the top. Skim off the milk solids. Once the butter has a nutty aroma and dark brown specks in the bottom of the pan, it is ready to use.

To prepare the lobster: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Lay the lobster medallions flat in an ovenproof pan; drizzle with $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of the brown butter and season with salt and pepper. Place in the oven for 2 minutes, or until just hot. Remove the lobster from the pan and reserve the juices in the pan.

ASSEMBLY

Toss the watercress in the reserved lobster juices; season to taste with salt and pepper. In the center of each shallow bowl, arrange some of the water chestnuts, apple, and watercress (reserve 8 stems of the watercress). Divide the lobster among the 4 bowls and arrange in an overlapping row atop the watercress. Sprinkle the orange segments around the bowl. Carefully pour some of the soup into each bowl around the lobster. Drizzle some of the brown butter over the lobster and around the soup. Sprinkle the orange zest and star anise over the soup and lobster and arrange the reserved watercress over the lobster.

WINE NOTES

The Hokkaido squash soup is rich with a low level of acidity, and is accented by an apple and orange garnish. The full-bodied Cuvée Sainte Catherine Riesling from Domaine Weinbach has lively acidity that cuts through the brown butter and reveals the citrus notes. A Pinot Blanc from Chalone accentuates the spice notes and makes another stellar pairing.