

## Cook this at Home: Great Performances' Sugar Pumpkin Soup with Pumpernickel Croutons

By MEREDITH DELISO | October 13, 2015



Pumpkin is popping up in grocery stores and farmers markets everywhere. But if you're looking to do more with the seasonal fruit than stick it on your stoop, consider this soup from Great Performances.

The New York City-based caterer's sugar pumpkin soup with pumpernickel croutons will be available as a special throughout the fall and winter at Mae Mae Café, one of several restaurants and cafes Great Performances operates. Great Performances executive sous chef Matthew Walker decided to make a pumpkin soup after getting a delivery of small pumpkins from the caterer's 60-acre farm, Katchkie Farm, in upstate New York.

"When I got my hands on them I decided to start playing around," said Walker. "It was a lot of trial and error, but this is one of the ones that everyone agreed was one of the best."

Walker likes the soup's "velvetiness," which comes from roasting, simmering and pureeing the ingredients. "The technique behind it creates a very nice texture," Walker said.

To start, first roast the pumpkin by splitting it in half, removing the seeds, placing it flesh-side down on a baking sheet and roasting it for 1 hour at 250 degrees.

Walker likes to use small sweet pumpkins, like red kuri or Jonathan.

"The great thing about smaller pumpkins is not only do they have a lot more flavor, but they roast quicker," Walker said. "The smaller pumpkin also goes well with the home cook, who doesn't need a giant Jack-o'-lantern that's 20 pounds to serve four or five people."

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Once roasted, you can let the pot and blender do the rest of the work. In addition to the nutrient-dense, antioxidant-rich pumpkin, the recipe features coconut milk, carrot juice and ginger, which simmers on the stove for 20 minutes before being blended into a puree.

Walker uses coconut milk, instead of a soup standard like chicken stock, so that the soup is vegan.

One tool Walker always uses when making soup is a chinois, a very fine strainer. "I run all of my soups through that first. That helps take out any of the chunks that didn't get properly pureed," he said.

Once ready to serve, the soup features pumpernickel croutons for the garnish. Great Performances gets the bread from Tom Cat Bakery in Long Island City.

"I was strongly debating using rye or pumpernickel, but the pumpernickel had a really good contrast in color to the pumpkin soup," Walker said. "It reminded me of Halloween, so I just tied to two together."

For a gluten-free option, though, the chef recommends topping with toasted pumpkin seeds instead.

## **GREAT PERFORMANCES' SUGAR PUMPKIN SOUP WITH PUMPERNICKEL CROUTONS**

*SERVES: 4*

1 small sugar pumpkin (about 4 lbs.), de-seeded and roasted  
1 cup of coconut milk  
1 cup of carrot juice  
1 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg  
4 tbs. light brown sugar  
2 tbs. roughly chopped pickled ginger  
Zest and juice of one lemon  
1/4 cup sherry wine  
Pumpernickel croutons for garnish  
Honey for garnish  
Salt and white pepper

After roasting the pumpkin, spoon out the meat and add it to a medium-size heavy bottom pot. Combine the rest of the ingredients with the pumpkin in the pot and simmer for 20 minutes. Purée in a blender until smooth. Season with salt and white pepper. Garnish with pumpernickel croutons and honey.