

Wine & Dine with Jeff

Sausage Stuffed Acorn Squash

Sausage Stuffed Acorn Squash Pairing
with Evan's Ranch Las Brisas Sta. Rita
Hills Syrah 2017



INGREDIENTS

- ❑ 2 small to medium green acorn squash
- ❑ 2 tablespoons of melted butter
- ❑ 1/4 Teaspoon of ground Cinnamon
- ❑ 1 Pound of chicken fennel sausage or your favorite sausage
- ❑ 2 Tablespoons of olive oil
- ❑ 1 large pear diced
- ❑ 1 small yellow onion diced about 1 cup
- ❑ 4 cloves of garlic minced 1 tablespoon
- ❑ 1/2 Teaspoon of allspice
- ❑ 1/8 teaspoon of ground nutmeg
- ❑ 2 Tablespoon of Fresh sage
- ❑ 4 Oz Gruyere swiss cheese grated about 1 cup
- ❑ 1/4 cup of sour cream
- ❑ (Optional) garnish with dried cranberries

DIRECTIONS

1. I just love when the fall rolls in and fresh local squash arrives at our local stores and farmers markets. When we think of squash most people use butternut squash but acorn squash has a sweet nutty flavor that stand out after roasting in the oven. Entertaining

with this dish is fabulous because we use the shell of the acorn squash as your bowl it's a beautiful presentation. Acorn squash come in many different heirloom varieties that have similar taste but I have one that I like. The dark green acorn squash is my favorite for the sweet taste and less fibrous. For today's recipe I tried two different types one is the green acorn squash and the other is the courge acorn squash pictured below. On the left is the courge acorn squash and my favorite squash is the green acorn on the right for it's sweeter flavor.

2. You want to cut the squash in half and don't be intimidated if you have never done that. I have great tips to make things go smoothly. The skins and the flesh of the squash is very hard to cut through so my first tip is to microwave the squash for just one minute it will soften the skin without cooking the squash. The most important tip is that you want to find the side of the squash that is most stable on the cutting board, I usually remove the stem and that side is the most stable meaning that the squash does not rock while you are cutting it. Using a very sharp knife I am using my chef's knife place at the top of the squash softly hit the top of knife with your kitchen rubber mallet or palm of your hand to slice through the tough outer skin then rock the knife back and forth cutting down until the knife hits the cutting board and the squash falls into two halves..

3. With a spoon remove all the seeds and the fibrous strings in

the middle of the squash. Your pumpkin carving skills will come in handy at this time. Lay the squash halves skin side down and flesh side up then brush the flesh side where you scooped out the seeds with the melted butter. Salt and pepper the flesh of the acorn squash. Then sprinkle ground cinnamon on the top of the acorn squash. Place squash in a roasting pan with about 1 1/2 cups of water at the bottom just enough to have about 1/4 inch of water on the bottom so the acorn squash does not burn skin side down flesh side up. Place in a 400 degree Fahrenheit oven for 55 minutes or until it is fork soft and tender.

4. While the acorn squash is roasting in the oven it's time to start the sausage filling it is great to have them come together at the same time. In a sauté pan add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and turn the burner to medium high heat. I am using chicken fennel sausage that I love with this recipe and it come in casings, Remove the casings until you have just ground sausage, and use your favorite sausage. When the oil starts to shimmer add the ground sausage with the spices allspice and nutmeg and brown will take about 6 minutes. Then add the diced onions, minced garlic, diced pear and fresh sage and cook with sausage for about 3 minutes until the onions release all their juices and become translucent. Turn the burner off and add half of the swiss cheese about 1/2 cup and the sour cream and stir to incorporate the sour cream and cheese in the sausage.

5. After 55 minutes test the acorn squash with a fork if it slides in and out of the squash with no resistance the squash is done remove from the oven and let cool for about 5 minutes. When the Acorn squash is cool enough to touch with a spoon remove the flesh of the acorn squash leaving about 1/4 inch that is attached to the shell so the acorn squash doesn't cave in and holds it's shape. This is important if you scoop out to much the shell of the acorn squash will collapse.

6. Our last and easy step is to mix the roasted acorn squash flesh that you scooped out with the creamy sausage filling. At this time you want to test for salt level. Remember many of the prepared sausage links have salt and spices in them already. If it is needing salt at this time you can add some to the sausage filling mixture. Stuff the acorn squash with the mixture and top with the grated gruyere cheese. Place in the 375 degree preheated oven for about 15 minutes until the cheese melts. For a touch of sweetness you can garnish the acorn squash with dried cranberries. One import tip about the size of acorn squash if you are buying large acorn squash not the small to medium size I recommended you will have to increase the amount of sausage to fill the squash. I know because I have done that mistake in the past and didn't have enough filling to fill the squash. Enjoy and happy cooking