



## Squash and Sage Soup

(makes 4 servings)

*Boy is this good - my resident soup tasters have given it top, top, top marks! I started using sage when roasting squash and pumpkin in the oven and decided that it was such a great marriage that it was time to experiment and make a soup that celebrates this perfect pairing and not only is it a delight to look at with the chilli and sage topping but it also tastes delectable.*

### Ingredients

1 red chilli, de-seeded and very finely diced  
10 sage leaves, finely sliced (4 for the topping, 6 for the soup)  
Light olive oil  
500g peeled and roughly chopped squash of choice or de-seeded pumpkin  
500mls chicken or vegetable stock  
1 medium onion, peeled and very finely sliced or diced  
Pinch of sugar  
1 level tablespoon cornflour  
150mls double cream  
50g butter  
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice  
Sea salt  
White pepper

### Method

Sauté the chilli and 4 of the sliced sage leaves in a little olive oil until both are slightly crisp around the edges then remove from the pan to a small plate, cover and set aside.

Sauté the squash or pumpkin in 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a medium-sized soup pot until lightly coloured and slightly caramelised around the edges.

Add the stock, onion and sugar, bring slowly to the boil, quickly turn the heat to very low and simmer for 15 minutes before turning off the heat and allowing the soup to cool a little.

In a bowl, mix the cornflour into the cream and whisk until smooth then gradually add to the pot, stirring all the time.

Bring the soup slowly back to the boil, stirring continually until it slightly thickens then turn off the heat and stir in the rest of the sage.

Transfer the soup to a blender with the butter and lemon juice and whizz until really smooth and frothy then return to a clean pot (through a fine sieve), season to taste with salt and white pepper and very gently reheat until piping hot.

Serve with the chilli/sage topping.

**NB:** white pepper powder is a great deal more pungent than black pepper so watch how you go - add it pinch by pinch until you are happy with the result!