

Honeyed Butternut Squash Pie with Pine Nuts

When I served this creation for the first time, with a few serious pumpkin pie lovers around the holiday table, I was nervous. I had been mulling over this recipe for weeks. I knew all too well that my bright citrus-spiked filling, inspired by the Mediterranean and barely sweet, didn't resemble the classic holiday dessert, often intensely sweet and rich with warm spices. But as everyone took a forkful, the table fell silent. Someone muttered, "Pumpkin pie step aside." No one missed the sugar. If making this for the first time, add the larger amount of honey unless your palate is accustomed to less sweet desserts.

Crunchy hazelnuts in the crust contrast with the creamy silky-smooth filling. Resinous pine nuts, lightly caramelized, cut through the natural sweetness of roasted squash. Top with a spoonful of heavy cream flavored with maple syrup, or with a dash of Grand Marnier or limoncello (see page 265).

BAKING TIME 45 to 55 minutes
MAKES 1 (9-inch / 23 cm) pie to serve 8 to 10

425 g (scant 2 cups) roasted and mashed butternut squash at room temperature (see page 260)
50 to 80 g (2½ to 4 tablespoons) runny honey (see page 27), depending on preference
1 tablespoon finely grated zest of tangerines, or a mixture of lemon and orange, preferably organic
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg, preferably freshly grated
2 large eggs at room temperature
120 g (½ cup) heavy cream, plus 1 or 2 more tablespoons, as needed
1 parbaked Honey Hazelnut Tart or Pie Shell (page 247)
Caramelized or toasted pine nuts, for garnish (see page 254)

1 Heat the oven to 325°F (160°C) with a rack in the center.

2 In a large, wide bowl, beat the squash, honey, zest, vanilla, salt, and nutmeg vigorously, using a fork and pressing on large lumps, until the ingredients are well blended, about 1 minute. The mixture will not be super-smooth; that's fine. In a 2-cup (500 ml) measure with a spout, beat the eggs with the same fork until frothy, 45 seconds to 1 minute, then gradually beat in the cream until combined. Pour the egg mixture into the squash mixture, continuing to beat all the while, until no light streaks remain. The filling should be thick, yet pourable. If your squash is dense, add 1 or 2 tablespoons more cream.

3 Scrape the filling into the parbaked pie shell and even it out with the back of a spoon; the crust will be very full, but should not overflow the edge of the tart shell (see Baker's Notes, especially if using the larger amount of honey). Garnish with 2 to 3 tablespoons of pine nuts in the center. Place the pan on a large rimless baking sheet for easier handling and carefully transfer to the oven (it can slide!).

4 Bake until the filling firms up with a deep golden-orange color and the center barely jiggles when the pan is gently prodded, rotating the baking sheet halfway, 45 to 55 minutes.

An instant-read thermometer inserted near the center should show 165°F (74°C). If the nuts or the rim of the crust darken too much toward the end of baking, cover loosely with a piece of aluminum foil.

5 Carefully remove the baking sheet and allow the tart pan to slide onto a wire rack. Allow to cool completely, at least 2 hours. Cut into eight to ten pieces with a long, sharp or serrated knife, cleaning it with hot water and wiping dry between slices as needed.

Baker's Notes

Weight, density of filling, and baking time can vary considerably with roasted squash, so follow visual and other cues in the recipe.

TO VARY For a nice tang, replace 30 g (2 tablespoons) of cream with full-fat Greek yogurt, beating it in until well blended.

MAKE AHEAD Butternut squash can be roasted a few days ahead (see page 260). The whole pie can be baked up to 8 hours ahead.

STORE Leftover pie will keep in a lidded container at cool room temperature for 1 day, or refrigerate for 2 days. The crust softens a bit, but the pie is still delicious.

Caramelized Pine Nuts

A little sugar goes a long way here, enhancing the nuts with delicate crunch. Or just use toasted nuts, as made in **step 1**.

65 g (½ cup) pine nuts
2 teaspoons cane sugar

1 Have a plate next to the stove at the ready. Tip the nuts into a 10-inch (25 cm) heavy-bottom skillet, preferably cast-iron. Toast over medium-low heat, watching closely and stirring frequently, until the nuts take on a bit of color, about 3 to 5 minutes.

2 Increase the heat to medium and sprinkle the sugar evenly across. Cook until the sugar melts and the nuts turn golden brown, stirring almost all the while, especially toward the end, 2 to 3 more minutes. As soon as the sugar starts to smoke, scrape the nuts onto the plate; you don't want them to blacken. Pine nuts will crisp as they cool.

For a striking decorative nut ring: Ask someone to hold a bowl or turned-over plate over the top of the pie, about 1½ inches (4 cm) smaller in diameter than the filling, almost touching the surface, then spoon the toasted/caramelized pine nuts all around. A few strays enhance the look. Remove the bowl and sprinkle more nuts into the center.

Baker's Notes

MAKE AHEAD Caramelized pine nuts can be prepared up to 5 days ahead; store in a jar with a tight-fitting lid.

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MARIA SPECK

From the author of *Ancient Grains for Modern Meals*, winner of the Julia Child First Book Award