

Soup and Bread

January 2011

Menu:

Cauliflower and Bacon Chowder
Spicy Chicken Tortilla Soup with Cilantro Crema
Caramelized Onion Focaccia
Corn and Gruyere Muffins

Cauliflower and Bacon Chowder

makes about 12 cups

4 bacon slices, cut into small pieces
2 cups diced white onion
2 cup diced celery
3 tbl flour
8 cups small chopped cauliflower
2 cups finely diced red potatoes,
1 tbl fresh chopped thyme
4 cups chicken stock, plus more as needed
2 cups heavy cream
salt and pepper
chopped chives, for garnish

***** Preparation ******

Heat a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the bacon and cook until crisp. Remove from the pan, leaving the fat behind and set the bacon aside.

Add the onions and celery (and a little butter if the pan is too dry) and a pinch of salt. Cook for 5 minutes until soft but not browned. Add the flour and cook for 1 minute.

Add the cauliflower and potato and thyme. Add the chicken stock and the cream. Add more stock as need until the vegetable are covered by about 1 inch of liquid.

Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes until veggies are soft -- soup will have thickened JUST slightly.

Season with salt and pepper.

Serve topped with chives and the cooked bacon pieces.

Spicy Chicken Tortilla Soup with Cilantro Crema

makes about 12 cups

for the soup:

olive oil
2 cups diced white onion
1 cup diced celery
2 cups diced carrots
2 tbl finely chopped garlic
1 tbl ancho chili powder
1 tbl ground cumin
1 tbl dried oregano
3 tbl tomato paste
8 cups chicken stock
1 tsp chopped chipotle chilies, plus more to taste
4 boneless chicken breast
2 tbl fresh lime juice, plus more to taste
salt and pepper

for the garnish:

1 1/2 cups sour cream
1/3 cup finely chopped cilantro
lime wedges, for serving
tortillas chips, for serving

***** Preparation ******

Heat a large pot over medium-high heat. Add a swirl of olive oil. Add the onions, celery and carrots and a pinch of salt. Cook until onions are soft -- about 10 minutes. Add the garlic, chili powder, cumin, oregano and tomato paste. Cook for about 1 minute or until spices are very fragrant.

Stir in the chicken stock and chipotle and bring to a boil.

Pat the chicken very dry and gently drop into the soup. Adjust the heat so the soup is barely simmering. Cook for 12 minutes and use tongs to remove the chicken. Set aside to cool. Shred or chop the chicken into small pieces and return to the soup. Add the lime juice and season with salt and pepper to taste.

For the garnish:

In a bowl, stir together the sour cream and cilantro and season with salt and pepper.

Serve the soup topped with crushed tortilla chips and dollop of the sour cream and a lime wedge.



Caramelized Onion Focaccia

makes 1 9x13 pan

for the focaccia:

3 cups warm water

4 1/2 tsp yeast

2 tbl honey

2 tsp salt

6-7 cups all purpose flour

for the onions:

2 tbl butter

6 cups thinly sliced onions

1 tsp chopped rosemary

***** Preparation ******

For the focaccia dough:

Stir together the water, yeast, honey and salt in the bowl of a standing mixer. Let sit for 10 minutes. Add 6 cups of the flour and knead (using the dough hook attachment) for 3-4 minutes until the dough no longer sticks to the side of the bowl -- add up to one cup more flour as needed.

Coat a bowl with olive oil and place the dough into the bowl. Cover loosely with a clean towel and put in a warm place for 45 minutes or until doubled in size. Punch down and turn dough into an oiled 9x13 baking pan -- press dough into the shape of the pan (it's OK if the dough doesn't fill the whole pan at this point). Cover and let sit for 30 minutes.

For the onions:

Place a large skillet over medium-high heat and add the butter. Once melted, add the onions, the rosemary and a pinch of salt. Once the onions begin to become brown, lower the heat and let cook slowly for 20-30 minutes until very golden.

To bake:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Top the focaccia with the onions and bake for 20 minutes or until golden and cooked through.

Let cool just slightly before serving.

Corn & Gruyere Muffins

makes 12 muffins

3 cups flour
1 cup sugar
1 cup cornmeal
2 tbl baking powder
1 1/2 tsp salt
1 cup shredded gruyere
1/4 cup finely chopped chives
1 cup frozen corn kernels
1 1/2 cups whole milk
2 sticks butter, melted and cooled
2 eggs

***** Preparation ******

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Line a standard muffin tin with paper liners.

Whisk together the flour, sugar, cornmeal, baking powder and salt. Stir in the cheese, chives and corn.

In another bowl, whisk together the milk, butter and eggs. Stir the egg mixture into the dry ingredients.

Scoop the batter into the muffin tins -- fill them to the top.

Bake for 25-30 minutes or until a tester inserted in the middle comes out clean.

Let cool slightly before serving.