

Salt and Serenity

Pan-fried Butternut Squash and Apple Salad

Recipe very slightly adapted from Haan Palcu-Chang's recipe in The Globe and Mail on October 18, 2016.

Serves 4

½ cup hazelnuts
4 tablespoons sunflower or other vegetable oil
1 small butternut squash, peeled and seeded and cut into ¼ inch thin slices
2 tablespoons butter
2 Honeycrisp or Granny Smith apples, cut into julienne strips
2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 green onion, thinly sliced
15 large mint leaves, coarsely chopped
¼ cup pomegranate seeds

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Place the hazelnuts on a baking sheet and roast in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes until they are fragrant. Place toasted hazelnuts into a Tupperware container and secure lid tightly. Shake the container vigorously for a few minutes. This will loosen the skins. Open container, remove skinned hazelnuts and discard skins. Let hazelnuts cool completely and then coarsely chop nuts and set aside.
2. Place a large non-stick or cast iron pan over medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon of sunflower oil. Place as the squash slices in the pan in a single layer (you will have to cook squash in a few batches) and let them cook for 4 to 5 minutes. You want them heavily caramelized, almost burned. Flip the squash over and repeat the cooking process on the other side. Add a fresh tablespoon of oil for each new batch. Squash can be cooked a few hours ahead of time. Keep at room temperature and warm in 300°F oven before assembling salad.
3. Heat a small pan over medium and add the butter. Once the butter starts frothing, keep a close eye on it and remove once the milk solids floating in the butter are a dark nutty brown. Remove immediately from the heat and place in a bowl. Whisk in vinegar.

4. Slice apple pieces into julienne strips.
5. Assemble the salad: Place the apple and squash in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Add the brown butter vinaigrette, salt and pepper and toss gently. Taste for seasoning. Slide salad onto a platter. Scatter green onions, chopped mint, pomegranate seeds and chopped hazelnuts over the salad and serve immediately.