

Wood-Grilled Toca Squash Soup

Written by Arizona Foothills Magazine

Our hat's off to Kai of Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa! This unmatched establishment, under the direction of Executive Chef Michael O'Dowd and Chef de Cuisine Jack Strong, was awarded the AAA Five Diamond Award—for the second time. To celebrate, we bring you one of Kai's yummiest spring soups.

5 pounds Toca or butternut squash, peeled
3 1/2 quarts Chicken stock
6 Shallots, sliced
2 Mojo Rojo chilies
Salt and pepper to taste
3 Carrots, chopped
1 pound Rio Zape beans, soaked overnight
Mineral water
1 bunch Fresh thyme
1 head Garlic, sliced in half
1 C Wild boar bacon, diced
1 Yellow onion, sliced
3 stalks Celery, chopped
14 cloves Garlic, peeled
2 pints Heavy cream
4 C Mesquite chips, soaked in water
Juice of 1 lime
1/2 C Piquillo peppers, grilled and diced
1/4 C Chiffonade of opal basil
Cotton candy
1 T Aji Amarillo chili spice

Place wet mesquite chips on the grill. Cut and peel the squash into one-inch-thick slices. Grill and cover the squash to achieve marks and smoky flavor. In a large pot, sauté the onions, celery, carrots, garlic cloves and shallots. De-seed one of the Mojo Rojo chilies and leave the other whole, and add both to the pot along with the grilled squash. Add the chicken stock, and simmer until the squash is cooked through. Purée in a blender, pass through a chinois cap, and finish with heavy cream and lime juice. Salt and pepper to taste. For the bean mixture, cook the beans in salted mineral water with fresh thyme and one head of garlic (sliced in half) until done. Strain and blend half the beans with water to a purée; fold in the whole beans and set aside. To assemble, sauté the bacon and add the bean purée, chiffonade of opal basil and diced piquillos. Spoon the mixture into the middle of your bowl, top with cotton candy and generously sprinkle your ground Aji Amarillo chili spice on top of the cotton candy. Pour your warmed soup into the bowl and enjoy. Yield: Eight servings.