

A Sutherland Belle

Roasted Butternut Squash Vodka Pasta with Crispy Pancetta

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

For the Roasted Butternut Squash

6 cups peeled and cubed butternut squash (about 30 ounces)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves or 1½ teaspoons dried thyme
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

For the Pasta and Sauce

1 pound girelle or rigatoni pasta
6 ounces diced pancetta
2 medium shallots, finely chopped (about ½ cup)
6 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
⅓ cup vodka
1½ cups low-sodium chicken stock, plus up to ½ cup more as needed
½ cup heavy cream
1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
1 cup reserved pasta cooking water, as needed
Fresh thyme leaves, crushed red pepper flakes, crispy pancetta, and freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Arrange the butternut squash in a single layer on a large rimmed baking sheet. Toss with the olive oil, rosemary, thyme, salt, and black pepper. Roast for 25 to 35 minutes, turning halfway through, until completely tender and lightly golden around the edges.
2. Meanwhile, cook the pancetta in a large, deep skillet over medium heat for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until golden and crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pancetta to a paper towel-lined plate. Reserve 2 tablespoons of rendered fat in the skillet, discarding any excess.

3. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Add the shallots to the skillet and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened. Add the garlic and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, stirring frequently, until fragrant but not browned.
4. Stir in the smoked paprika and crushed red pepper flakes. Cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly, to bloom the spices in the pancetta fat.
5. Remove the skillet from the heat and carefully add the vodka. Return to medium heat and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, scraping the bottom of the skillet to release the browned bits, until the liquid has reduced substantially.
6. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chicken stock and stir to combine. Remove from the heat.
7. Transfer the roasted squash and shallot mixture to a high-speed blender. Add the remaining 1 cup chicken stock, salt, and black pepper. Blend until completely smooth and velvety, adding up to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup additional stock as needed to achieve a thick but pourable consistency.
8. Return the squash sauce to the skillet over low heat. Stir in the heavy cream and warm gently for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Do not boil.
9. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of generously salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta until 1 minute shy of al dente. Reserve 1 cup of pasta cooking water before draining.
10. Stir $\frac{1}{2}$ cup reserved pasta water into the squash sauce. Remove the skillet from the heat and gradually stir in the Parmigiano-Reggiano until incorporated. Add the drained pasta and toss gently to coat. Return the skillet to low heat and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, adding additional reserved pasta water as needed until the sauce is silky, glossy, and generously coats the pasta.
11. Taste and adjust the salt, black pepper, and red pepper flakes as needed. Remove from the heat and scatter the crispy pancetta over the pasta. Finish with fresh thyme leaves, additional red pepper flakes, and freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano. Serve immediately.

STORAGE

Refrigerate: Store leftover pasta in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Freeze: Freeze the squash sauce before adding cream and Parmesan for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before finishing.

Reheat: Warm gently in a skillet over low heat, adding a splash of chicken stock or water to restore the creamy consistency.