

How to Make Sweet Potato Leek Soup

by Pamela Fay

Sweet potatoes are among the world's most nutritional foods. Loaded with vitamins and minerals, they also have fiber, antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties. Besides being good for you, they are a hearty addition to many vegetable-based dishes. Combined with the delicate oniony flavor of leeks, sweet potatoes make a rich and satisfying soup. Serve this chunky soup as a starter or midday snack. Or, offer it with rustic whole grain bread and a side salad for a light and luscious meal.

You'll need:

- Large saucepan
- Blender
- 6 slices center-cut bacon
- 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large leek
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 small sweet potatoes
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 can fat-free evaporated milk
- Sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Sour cream

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Scrub, peel and dice the sweet potatoes into bite sized pieces, about 1 ½ to 2-inches. Toss the potatoes in 1 tbsp. olive oil to coat. Spread them in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour until tender and beginning to caramelize slightly. Set aside for use later.

Place bacon in the cold saucepan. Pan fry over medium heat. Turn bacon when it no longer sticks to the skillet and easily releases. Turn it and cook on the other side until the edges begin to brown. Turn it again and continue cooking and turning until it is evenly browned and crispy. Drain on paper towels. Crumble when cool and set aside as a garnish. Remove all but 1 tbsp. of bacon drippings from the pan. Turn off the burner while you prepare the leek.

Rinse the leek. Cut the roots very close to the bulbous base. Cut the stem end leaving about 4-inches of green above the white bulb. Slice the leek in half lengthwise and rinse again to remove any sandy debris from the interior. Chop into small pieces.

Saute the leek in the bacon drippings remaining in the saucepan for about 5 minutes over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until leek is tender. Peel and mince the garlic cloves. Add the garlic to the pot in the last 2 minutes. Add a little water to the pan to prevent sticking, if needed.

Add the diced sweet potatoes to the saucepan, along with the wine, chicken broth and milk. Stir thoroughly, scraping the bottom of the pan to loosen any browned bits from the bacon. Bring the soup to a boil. Cover and reduce the heat to simmer. Continue to cook for 15 to 20 minutes until the sweet potatoes are very tender.

Remove the pan from the heat. Allow to cool slightly. Ladle half of the soup into a blender. Puree until smooth. Add the blended soup back into the remaining chunky soup in the pan. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

Ladle into soup bowls. Top with crumbled bacon and serve.

Tips:

Sweet potatoes are caramelized when the sugars within them began to brown, turning the color of light caramel.

Save time and clean-up by cooking the bacon in the same saucepan that you will use for the soup.

Warning:

Remove the center piece from the blender lid so that steam does not build up while pureeing the hot soup. Cover the opening lightly with a towel. If your blender lid does not have an opening, allow the soup to cool.

References

“Caprial’s Soups and Sandwiches”; Caprial Pence and Mark Dowers; 1998

Heath Diaries; 7 Health Benefits of Sweet Potatoes

<http://www.healthdiaries.com/eatthis/7-health-benefits-of-sweet-potatoes.html>