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Panzanella Salad with Butternut Squash

Serves 6 - 8

Butternut squash is a fall favorite, and for good reason! This sweet, nutty vegetable is the perfect way to honor the changing of seasons. We slowly roast the squash until its edges crisp and caramelize, while the center remains soft and sweet. Paired with tart goat cheese, juicy raisins, and homemade croutons, this autumn version of a panzanella salad is dinner done well.

Ingredients:

1 small butternut squash
1/2 cup raw pumpkin seeds
or 1/2 cup pepitas
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2 bunches kale
2 tablespoons butter
3/4 tablespoon Za'taar
1 French loaf, cut into 1" cubes
3 oz arugula
2 tablespoons raisins
4 oz goat cheese, crumbled
1/4 red onion, thinly sliced
Additional salt and pepper to taste

Dressing:

3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
1 clove garlic, minced
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon honey
1 tablespoon tahini

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Wrangle the butternut squash by peeling, seeding and slicing it into 1" wedges. In a large bowl, toss the squash pieces with the raw pumpkin seeds, olive oil, cayenne, salt and pepper. Spread the mixture evenly on a roasting dish and roast for 40-45 minutes, turning the squash and seeds every 10 minutes until the squash is golden and tender. (If using pepitas, add to the roaster for just the last 5 minutes.) Remove from the oven.

2. Meanwhile, massage the kale in 1 tablespoon olive oil for about 2 minutes. Whisk together the dressing ingredients until all the ingredients are fully incorporated. Add half of the dressing to the kale, toss until the leaves are well-coated.

3. In a large skillet over medium-low heat, melt the butter and stir in the Za'taar seasoning. Add the cubes of bread and toss until croutons are evenly coated. Continue sautéing over medium heat until the croutons are golden and crispy.

4. Add the arugula to the kale, and top with the roasted butternut squash, pumpkin seeds, croutons, raisins, red onion, and crumbled goat cheese. Drizzle with the remaining dressing and season with additional salt and pepper to taste. Enjoy immediately.