



This is a precious jewel of a soup studded with pretty, red adzuki beans along with just a hint of fragrant five-spice. We love the salty sesame shiitake mushrooms that adorn the soup and draw all the flavors together.

Preheat a large stockpot over medium heat. Sauté the onion and pepper in the peanut oil for about 10 minutes, or until the onion just begins to brown.

Add the ginger and garlic and sauté for 1 more minute. Add the salt, five-spice, acorn squash, and pear, and cook, stirring often, for another minute before adding the vegetable broth. Cover and bring to a boil. Once the soup is boiling, lower the heat to medium-low and simmer briskly for about 20 more minutes, or until the squash is tender.

Puree half of the soup, using either an immersion blender or by transferring half of the soup to a food processor or blender, processing, and pouring it back into the rest of the soup (don't forget, if using a blender or food processor, to let the soup cool a bit so that the steam does not compress in the processor and hurt you).

Add the adzuki beans and lime juice. Cover and simmer over low heat just until the beans are heated through, 7 to 10 minutes.

**Meanwhile, prepare the mushrooms:** Preheat a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat. Add the oils and sauté the mushrooms for about 7 minutes, until they are soft. Mix in the soy sauce and stir constantly until it is absorbed, about 1 minute.

Ladle the soup into bowls and top with the sautéed mushrooms.

#### TIPS

Acorn squash is a pain in the tuchus to peel. The best way we've found is to cut the squash in half and seed it, then cut into chunks (¾ inch, in this case). Use a paring knife to slice off the skin.

To remove the seeds from pears, peel and slice in half, then use a measuring teaspoon to scoop the seeds right out.

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## ACORN SQUASH, PEAR, & ADZUKI SOUP

WITH SAUTÉED SHIITAKES

SERVES 6 / TIME: 1 HR

- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1 large yellow onion, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and cut into ¼-inch slices
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
- 2 acorn squashes, seeded, peeled, and cut into ¾-inch chunks
- 2 firm Bartlett pears, peeled, seeded, and sliced into thin (not paper-thin) slices roughly 1 inch long
- 4 cups vegetable broth, purchased or homemade (page xx)
- 1 (15-ounce) can adzuki beans, drained and rinsed (about 1½ cups)
- About 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

#### Mushrooms:

- 2 teaspoons peanut oil
- ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 4 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms, sliced in half (about 1½ cups)
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce