

Sformata of Winter Squash and Reggiano Parmesan

Sformata of Winter Squash and Reggiano Parmesan by Greg Atkinson

A "sformata" is a kind of savory flan or custard. In Italy, these are presented as a first course in place of soup. I served these (minus the cheese and radicchio) at Four Swallows using Persephone Farm's Banana Squash. They came as a side dish with Niman Ranch Pork chops, tart cherry chutney and sautéed kale. Greg Atkinson

1 lb winter squash, such as delicate, acorn, or kabocha

½ medium white or yellow onion, peeled and thinly sliced (about 1 cup)

2 tbsp unsalted butter

½ cup half-and-half

1 tsp kosher salt

3 large eggs

½ cup grated Reggiano Parmesan

½ cup Reggiano Parmesan curls, for garnish

1 small head radicchio

2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

1. Preheat oven to 375° and butter six 4-ounce ramekins. Place in baking dish that will comfortably hold them all.
2. Cut squash into wedges and scrape out seeds, then cut away the peel. Cut the peeled and seeded squash into 1-inch dice. About 2 ½ cups of cubed squash.
3. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat and cook onion, stirring often until tender and golden brown, about 5 minutes. Add half-and-half and squash, then bring the mixture to a boil, cover and reduce heat to low. Let squash simmer gently for 15 minutes or until tender.
4. In a blender, whirl the eggs with salt then add squash mixture and grated cheese and puree until smooth. Divide mixture evenly among the ramekins.
5. Pour boiling water into baking dish around ramekins until it reaches halfway up the sides, then cover baking dish with buttered aluminum foil. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until a knife inserted in center comes out clean.
6. Break the radicchio into individual leaves and distribute the leaves evenly between six plates. Drizzle balsamic vinegar over the radicchio and invert one of the squash custards on top of each plate. Garnish with Reggiano curls. Serve at once. (serves 6)