

Honorable Mention: Margaret Howard, Fuquay-Varina

### **Autumn Harvest Soup**

1 butternut squash, whole, 2 1/2 – 3 lbs.  
2 Tbsp. canola oil  
2 ½ Tbsp. butter  
1 large onion, quartered and sliced  
3 granny smith apples, peeled, cored and cut into eighths  
1 leek, cut into quarters, washed and thinly sliced  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
1 15 oz. can pumpkin  
1 qt. chicken broth  
8 oz. apple juice  
¼ tsp. cinnamon  
¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg  
¾ tsp. salt

Garnish – crème fraiche or sour cream and toasted pumpkin seeds (if using crème fraiche prepare the day before).

Cut squash in half and remove seeds. Rub cut sided with canola oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper and place cut side down on parchment lined baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees until fork tender, approximately 30 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Melt 1 ½ Tbsp. butter in a large, heavy pot over medium heat. Add onions, cooking until caramelized, stirring occasionally. Deglaze pan with a little balsamic vinegar if they stick. Remove onions. Melt 1 additional Tbsp. of butter in pot. Add apples and cook until lightly browned. Add leeks and garlic cooking until soft.

Scoop butternut squash form the skin and discard skin. Add squash, pumpkin, onions, chicken broth, apple juice, spices, and salt to the apple mixture. Stir all ingredients together. Cover and simmer over low heat until apples are soft, approximately 45-60 minutes. Puree with an immersion blender.

Garnish each bowl with a generous dollop of crème fraiche or sour cream and toasted pumpkin seeds.

#### **Crème Fraiche**

1 cup whipping cream  
2 Tbsp. butter milk  
Mix ingredients together, cover and leave at room temperature 8-24 hours, or until thick. Store Crème Fraiche in refrigerator.