

Creamy Cauliflower and Fennel Soup

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Both cauliflower and fennel peak in quality in cool weather, before hot sun damages the former's pale florets and makes the fennel more fibrous. This puree takes advantage of their complementary flavors, fusing them so that neither one dominates. If you like your soup on the thin side, you will use most of the tasty cooking broth to thin the puree; if you prefer a thicker soup, you can reserve any extra liquid for braising vegetables or thinning pasta sauce or simply enjoy the nutritious broth the next day. From *Eating Local* by Janet Fletcher (Andrews McMeel Publishing).

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more for serving
- 1/2 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 small bulb fennel, halved and thinly sliced (okay to include the core)
- 1/2 large cauliflower, in florets (about 3 cups or 3/4 pound after trimming)
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 5 cups chicken or vegetable broth (if canned, use equal parts broth and water)
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed fennel seed
- Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese



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Directions

Melt the butter in a large pot over moderate heat. Add the onion and saute until softened and just starting to color, 5 to 10 minutes. Add the fennel, cauliflower and thyme sprigs and stir to coat with the butter. Add the broth and bring to a simmer. Cover and adjust the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cook until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Remove the thyme sprigs.

With a slotted spoon, transfer the vegetables to a blender or food processor and blend until smooth, adding just enough of the cooking liquid to make a puree. Return to a clean pot and stir in the remaining cooking liquid, adding just enough to make soup of a consistency that you like. You may not need it all. Stir in the fennel seed and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Reheat the soup. Divide among soup bowls. Garnish each portion with a sliver of butter and a sprinkle of cheese.

Serves 6