Creamy Pumpkin Soup with Cocoa Croutons

The Soup

2 tbsp. butter
1 cup chopped shallots
1/2 tsp. sea salt
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup canned puréed pumpkin
1 cup chicken broth
1 cup cream

Heat a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the butter; if it browns, so much the better. Add the shallots and the salt, then sauté, stirring occasionally until shallots are soft and starting to brown. Add the garlic, the pumpkin, and the chicken broth. Whisk to combine. I use an immersion blender at this point so I don't have to dirty any more dishes, but you can blend this soup in a blender or a food processor, just get it smooth in whatever manner you choose. Make sure the soup is in the pot, then add the cream.

Heat to a simmer and adjust the salt (if you have used commercial chicken broth, you probably will not need any more salt, if you have used your precious homemade broth, chances are you will need a little more). Keep hot.

Cocoa Croutons

2 tbsp. butter
1 cup fresh bread cubes
1 tbsp. dark cocoa powder
¼ tsp. truffle salt (I am partial to Casina Rossa Italian sea salt with summer truffle)

Heat a small skillet over medium high heat. Add the butter and when it is melted, throw in the bread cubes and toss them around until coated evenly in butter. Don't get too carried away with your throwing and tossing or your bread will be all over the stove and/or floor. Continue to move the bread around until evenly browned and crispy. Depending on your stove head and weight of your skillet, you may need to adjust your flame so as not to burn your bread. Put the cocoa powder and truffle salt in a small mixing bowl. Toss the hot bread cubes in this mixture until evenly coated.

To serve, divide the soup among four soup bowls. Put some cocoa croutons on top and garnish with some toasted pumpkin seeds if you wish.

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