

## **PERSIAN BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP**

*(adapted from Saffron Tales)*

*for the soup:*

2 tbsp sunflower oil  
1 medium shallot, finely chopped  
¼ tsp coriander seeds  
¼ tsp cumin seeds  
1 butternut squash, cut in chunks  
2 dried limes  
3 cups water  
1 tablespoon butter  
2 tablespoons yogurt  
1 tbsp pomegranate molasses  
salt and black pepper to taste

*for topping:*

Greek yogurt  
pomegranate seeds (optional)  
toasted sunflower seeds

Heat the sunflower oil in a large saucepan. Add the shallots and cook gently until soft and fragrant. Toast the cilantro and cumin seeds in a small pan over low heat for a minute, then grind them with a pestle and mortar. Reserve. Add the butternut pieces to the pan with the sautéed shallot, then sprinkle the toasted ground spices, and stir well. Close and simmer for 5 minutes or so.

Pierce the dried limes with a fork a few times and add to the pan. Pour in the water, cover, and cook for around 20 minutes more, or until the squash is tender, easily pierced with a fork. Meanwhile, prepare the seed topping by toasting the sunflower seeds in a small pan for a few minutes. Transfer to a bowl to cool. When the squash is cooked, squeeze the dried limes against the side of the pan with a wooden spoon until they burst, releasing a lot of liquid. Remove the limes and discard them. Add the contents of the pan to a blender, and process until very smooth. With the blender running, add the butter, yogurt, and pomegranate molasses. Add salt and pepper, taste and adjust seasoning.

Ladle the soup into a bowl and top with yogurt, pomegranate seeds, and toasted sunflower seeds.