

Cleo Coyle's Nuts on Horseback

Bacon-Wrapped Butternut Squash (or Sweet Potato) Bites

Text and photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini.

This is my own adaptation of a retro treat from Victorian England that's still popular in the UK at Christmas. Each little package offers a delightful combo of flavors and textures. Simply take bite-sized pieces of butternut squash (or sweet potatoes), wrap each in a small strip of maple bacon, secure with a toothpick, brush with pure maple syrup, and roast. How much bacon? How much maple syrup? What temperature? My recipe answers those questions and shares tips. If you're curious about the odd recipe name, **Nuts on Horseback**, it comes from the recipe that inspired it: **Devils on Horseback**, in which you stuff a dried fruit (usually a prune or a date) with an almond or mango chutney before wrapping in bacon and cooking. Devils on Horseback was invented as a twist on another recipe: **Angels on Horseback**, in which a raw oyster or scallop is wrapped in bacon. In my own version, the "nut" comes not from an almond but the **butternut squash**, or try sweet potatoes, if you like.

P.S. If you're wondering why bacon is represented as "horseback" in these recipes, there are two theories, one reaching back to Norman warriors circa 1066. Learn more in my blog post [here](#) and...eat with historic holiday joy! ~ Cleo

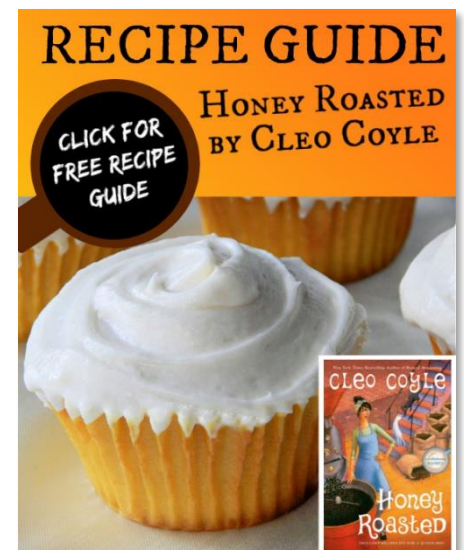
Makes about 80 appetizers

Ingredients:

1 butternut squash, 2 to 2.5 pounds (or sweet potatoes)

12 pieces maple bacon

3/4 cup pure maple syrup



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Step 1 – The Squash: First preheat your oven to 400° F. Peel, core, and slice up your butternut squash into bite-sized pieces. It's important to make them small enough to cook through in the roasting time given (or you may have uncooked squash pieces with burned bacon). For absolutely foolproof results, take the time to parboil the squash pieces. See page 3 for directions.

Tip on Peeling: Use a Y-shaped peeler for the best results in peeling the squash and make sure you peel away all of the skin and whitish rind, which is bitter. Your pieces should be completely orange.

Step 2 - The Bacon: Cut each strip of maple bacon into thirds. Cut each third into two long strips for 6 pieces per strip of bacon. Wrap the squash pieces in the bacon slice and secure it with a toothpick.

Step 3 – A MUST: Line a half-sheet pan or baking sheet with parchment paper or foil. The maple syrup will blacken as the appetizers cook and the parchment paper or foil will provide easy cleanup and prevent your pan from being ruined.



Step 4 – Using a pastry brush, splash each piece generously with maple syrup.

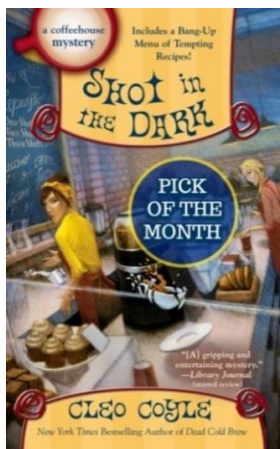
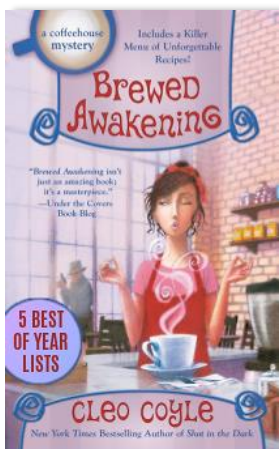
Step 5 – Roast the appetizers in a preheated 400° F. oven for about 25 minutes. You're watching for the squash to cook through without burning the bacon.

PARBOILING TIP: For foolproof results, take the time to parboil the butternut squash (or sweet potato) pieces for 3 to 4 minutes (no more!), just to make sure they cook through by the time the bacon is cooked.



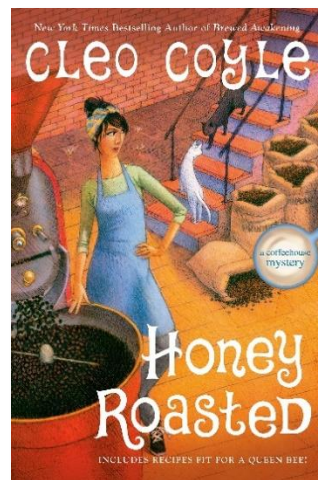
Directions for parboiling: bring a pot of water to a full, rolling boil. Avoid being splashed with hot water by using a ladle or large spoon to carefully lower your pieces into the water. Cook 3 to 4 minutes and use a slotted spoon to remove them, douse them in cold water to prevent over-cooking, and drain well. Follow the recipe from Step 2 onward, and may you ...

Eat with joy! ~ Cleo



The [Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) are bestselling culinary mysteries, set in a landmark Greenwich Village coffeehouse. Each includes the added bonus of recipes.

To learn more and see more recipes, visit Cleo Coyle's online coffeehouse at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com And her recipe blog at www.CleoCoyleRecipes.com



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