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## **butternut squash & ricotta bruschettas** **serves 6**

*I love the way recipes evolve; I believe this one started with Jean-Georges Vongerichten and I also saw a version from Mark Bittman. Not only do I like the savory-sweet thing of butternut squash and maple syrup, but I also love the creamy ricotta on the crisp toast.*

1 pound butternut squash, peeled and ½- to ¾-inch-diced  
Good olive oil  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
3 cups sliced yellow onions (2 onions)  
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar  
2 tablespoons pure Grade A maple syrup  
Apple cider or apple juice (optional)  
6 (½-inch-thick) slices rustic country bread, toasted (see note)  
1½ cups fresh ricotta, homemade (recipe follows) or store-bought

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Place the squash, 2½ tablespoons olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon black pepper, and the red pepper flakes on a sheet pan, toss, and spread out in one layer. Roast for 25 to 35 minutes, until very tender and starting to brown on the edges, tossing once with a metal spatula during roasting. Set aside.

Meanwhile, heat the butter and 2 tablespoons olive oil in a medium (10-inch) sauté pan. Add the onions and cook over medium to medium-low heat for 12 to 15 minutes, tossing occasionally, until golden brown. Add the vinegar and maple syrup and simmer over medium heat for 4 to 6 minutes, until the liquid is reduced. When the squash is tender, add it to the sauté pan with the onions and mash it lightly with a dinner fork. If the mixture is a little dry, add a few tablespoons of apple cider to moisten. Taste for seasonings and reheat over low heat, if necessary.

To assemble the bruschettas, spread a thick layer of ricotta on each toast and spoon the squash mixture on top. Sprinkle with salt and serve warm.

**Note:** *To toast the bread, brush with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and toast in a 350-degree oven for 12 to 15 minutes.*

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