Picarones
Sweet potato and pumpkin doughnuts

Makes 12–15 doughnuts
250g (9oz) sweet potato, peeled and cut into large chunks
250g (9oz) pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled and cut into large chunks
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon crushed aniseed

300g (10oz) plain flour
2g (1/4tsp) active dried yeast
475ml (16fl oz) vegetable oil for frying
fleasly ground black pepper
maple syrup or sugar syrup, to serve

1. Put the sweet potato and pumpkin in a large saucepan with just enough water to soften (don't add too much water, as the sweet potato and pumpkin have enough liquid content of their own -- otherwise you will end up with mush). Bring to a boil and simmer until tender, being careful to avoid scorching.

2. Drain off any excess liquid, and mash the sweet potato and pumpkin together to form a smooth paste. Season with the salt, aniseed, and pepper. Transfer to a large bowl, then tip in the flour and combine. Melt the yeast in 4 tablespoons warm water, and mix into the sweet potato mixture to make a fairly firm dough, adding more water or flour if necessary. Cover and leave in a bowl for 2 hours until the dough has doubled in size.

3. Heat the oil for frying. To test if the oil is hot enough, bear off a small ball of dough and shape into a ring by pressing it flat in your hands and making a hole in the centre with your thumb and forefinger. Gently drop the doughnut into the oil, being careful to avoid any splashing from the hot oil, and fry until golden brown on both sides, turning once during the cooking. Drain on kitchen paper. Taste and adjust the seasoning of the doughnut — it may need a little extra salt or some more aniseed. When you are happy with the seasoning, form the rest of the dough into rings, and fry in batches until pale golden brown on both sides, again turning once during cooking.

4. These are best eaten straight away. Serve piping hot with honey or sugar syrup for drizzling over the top.

*Make sure cooked veg is drained very well.