

Winter Squash



Acorn Squash



Spaghetti Squash



Butternut Squash



Carnival Squash

Did You Know

- Winter squash are harvested in the fall and can last into the winter if stored correctly.
- The skins are hard and usually not eaten, quite different from their summer squash cousins, such as zucchini.
- Gourds, cucumbers, and melons are all part of the Cucurbit family, but all have different origins. Squash and pumpkins are native to the Americas, while cucumbers originated in eastern Asia and melons in Africa or Persia.
- Squash is one of the oldest cultivated crops in the Western Hemisphere and was originally grown for its seeds. Seeds found in Mexico have been dated as 10,000 years old.
- To some Native American tribes, corn, beans, and squash are known as the "Three Sisters." These plants were grown together and were staples of many tribes in North America.
- Winter squash are loaded with vitamins A and C and provide approximately the same amount of potassium as bananas! It is also a source of vitamin B₆, magnesium, iron, and calcium. Beta-carotene which is found in many orange colored vegetables, including winter squash, turns into vitamin A. Vitamin A helps maintain good vision and keeps skin healthy.

Grow One of the Three Sisters

To grow winter squash you need considerable garden space and full sun. Start seedlings indoors 3-4 weeks

prior to planned planting date. Plant hardened off seedlings outdoors one week before last frost or plant seeds directly in garden. Winter squash may be grown in larger containers, but the vines and squash may need to be trellised or supported as they grow outside of the container. Vines will begin to die off as the squash reaches harvest time. Plant squash near corn and beans to complete a "Three Sisters Garden."

Buying Tips

Select winter squash that are firm, have dull-colored skin, and feel heavy for the size. Squash with cracks or brown or soft spots should be avoided. Part of the stem should be intact for optimal storage. Winter squash can be stored from 1 week to 6 months depending on the variety and storage conditions. Store winter squash in a dark area, with good ventilation, between 50-60°F for ideal storage conditions. Remove soil prior to storage and leave stem on. Once the squash is cut, wrap and store in the refrigerator for 1-2 days.

Cooking

To soften thick or hard rinds before cutting or peeling, poke holes in rind with fork, and microwave for 2-5 minutes. Remove from microwave, and allow to rest for 1-2 minutes until cool enough to handle. Roast squash by peeling and cubing squash. Place on baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil and low-sodium seasoning. Bake at 350°F for 45 minutes or until tender. Add cubed roasted squash to pasta, pizza, or salads. Squash is also fantastic in chili!



Recipes

Winter Squash and Kale Quesadillas

These are a delicious meal, easy for lunch or dinner, and can contain ground beef or shredded chicken for additional protein.

Developed by: Jessica Manly FoodCorps Service Member

Servings

8 quesadillas

Ingredients

1/2 whole winter squash, peeled, seeded, and diced

3 Tbsp 1 tsp canola oil

1/2 tsp kosher salt

Black pepper, to taste

1/4 tsp chili powder, more to taste

1 bunch kale, leaves torn, stalks discarded

8 flour or corn tortillas, small fajita sized, flour tortillas are sturdier
Butter for pan

2 cups Monterey Jack or Cheddar Cheese, grated

Salsa, avocado, hot sauce, or other toppings for servings

Preparation

1. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over high heat.
2. Add squash and sprinkle with salt, pepper, and chili powder. Cook for several minutes, turning gently with a spatula, until squash is deep golden brown and tender (but not falling apart). Move to a plate and set aside.
3. In the same skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of butter or oil over medium-high heat and add in the kale. Toss it around with tongs and cook it for 3-4 minutes. Add in the cooked squash and gently toss together. Set aside.
4. In a separate skillet, heat a teaspoon of oil or butter and lightly brown both sides of the 8 tortillas. Build the quesadillas one by one by adding a layer of cheese topped with a layer of the squash/kale mixture on half of the tortilla and then folding it over.
5. When the cheese is melted, flip to the other side for a minute or two and then remove from the skillet, and cut in half or thirds. Serve with salsa, avocado...or any sides you'd like!

Simply Delicious Roasted Butternut Squash Recipe

Get creative with the seasonings in this recipe to match your meal. Try cumin and mild chili powder for Mexican flavor, or drizzle with maple syrup for a fall treat.

Developed by: Emma Fernandez, FoodCorps Service Member

Servings

6 servings (depending on size of squash)

Ingredients

1 Butternut squash - peeled, seeded, and cut into cubes

Can substitute any type of winter squash for Butternut including Acorn, Buttercup, Carnival.

2 Tbsp olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

Salt and ground black pepper to taste

Optional: drizzle with honey, or sprinkle with dried rosemary, or create your own flavor combination

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Toss butternut squash with olive oil and garlic in a large bowl. Season with salt and black pepper (and honey and rosemary or other seasons if using). Arrange coated squash on a baking sheet.
3. Roast in the preheated oven until squash is tender and lightly browned, stirring once, 25-30 minutes.

Book Nook

The Little Squash Seed, by Gayla Scale

Sophie's Squash, by Pat Zietlow

Too Many Pumpkins, by Linda White

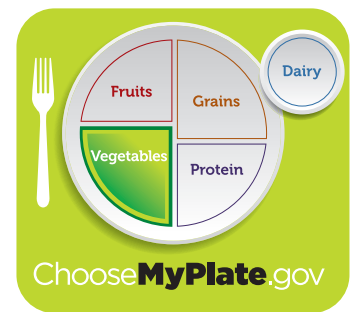
Pumpkin Pumpkin, by Jeanne Titherington



Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit:

www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.



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The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between the Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.

Funds were provided in part by a USDA Team Nutrition Training grant, a USDA Farm to School grant, Montana Healthcare Foundation, Northern Pulse Growers Association, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and Montana School Nutrition Association. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach. This publication was supported by the Grants or Cooperative Agreements Numbers, 6 U58DP004818-03-01 & 5 U58DP004818-03-00, and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the DPHHS.