

Winter Squash

Why bother?

- Because it's **good for you!** Mother said so, it must be so. She is right. All squashes are nutrient dense, high in anti-oxidants, beta-carotenes, fiber and vitamins. Look it up for yourself.
- Because squash **tastes good!** If you did not care for squash as a child, give it another chance as our taste buds change as we grow older. We will taste a few different kinds of winter squash today and a few of the recipes that will make it a favorite treat for fall and winter cooking.
- Because **there are so many tasty ways to use squash** as part of a healthy, local diet for the whole family.
- Because **it's cheap!** A few dollars spent on a squash is well worth it when you consider how long it will store, how it can be frozen as diced raw squash or mashed portions to use through the winter and well into spring. We'll find out how to preserve and keep squash on hand to use in baking, roasting, soups, etc.



I did not know there were so many kinds! Winter squash meant to me Danish or acorn squash with too much butter and brown sugar or Hubbard squash boiled and mashed or Pumpkin Pie, of course. Today we have other new and heirloom varieties on the market such as Delicatas, Red Kuri, Sweet Meat, Fairy, spaghetti squash, butternut and countless others. Your farmer can tell you about the differences and ways they enjoy them. But you will just have to try a few to taste them for yourself. We will taste a few of them today.

How long does it before I have to use it up or freeze it or preserve it?

For long term storage, be sure to pick out a squash with undamaged skin and a stem at least 2-4 inches long. Cuts, scrapes and a broken stem can let bacteria to get into the flesh, causing early spoilage. Winter squash harvested from your garden or gifted by a neighbor should be "cured" outside in a warm, dry place for up to 2 weeks, allowing the skins to harden to protect the meat inside. Keep squash in a single layer in a cool, dry place 55-70 degrees, such as an insulated garage, a closet in an unheated area or under the bed. Check once in a while for any signs of spoilage and use those first. Length of storage depends on the type of squash for best flavor:

Acorn or Danish squash, 5-6 weeks

Spaghetti, pumpkin, Delicata squashes, 2-3 months

Butternut squash and pie pumpkins, 3-6 months

Hubbard, Sweet Meat, Kabocha, Fairy, and other thick meat squash, 4 – 6 months.

Longer storage will result in squash that tends to be dry and starchy.

How do I preserve squash for longer term storage?

Freeze it! If you are gifted with squashes from a neighbors' yard or find a good deal with your local farmer, you can use some up right away and store others for later use without crowding your freezer. Lucky you! So, if you find you still have squash, then cut, steam or mash to freeze as whole cubes, mashed/pureed for side dishes, soups, breads, cakes, pies and even dog treats.

Diced/Cubed: Cut the squash in manageable pieces, removing the stringy interior. Save the seeds to dry and toast for garnishes or a treat for your feathered friends this winter. Peel the squash using a vegetable peeler or paring knife. Dice in ½ to 1 inch pieces. Freeze raw or parboiled or roasted pieces on a baking tray for 8-10 hours. Then place the frozen squash cubes in freezer bags or containers, pressing out as much air out as possible. Take

out to thaw what you need to boil, to roast or to add to stews or soups. For pickles, follow the directions to the recipe from a safe source noted below.

Pureed: Cut the squash into manageable pieces, either in strips, peeled or unpeeled chunks as you prefer. Dredge or brush in oil and spices if desired. Place in an oiled baking dish at 350 degrees for up to an hour until a knife easily pierces the meat. Scoop out some of the cooked squash to eat fresh with butter, salt and pepper. Mash the roasted squash and press ½ cups into silicone muffin tins or plastic wrap lined muffin tins for freezing. Once frozen in these ½ cup portions, pop them out and keep in freezer bags for soups, breads, biscuits, soups, baby food, etc. Real convenience food.

Pressure can it! Squash is a low acid food so it must be pressure canned in jars and ONLY in the form of cubes or chunks. Peel and dice in 1 inch cubes, no smaller, and pack raw in quart or pint jars with added water. Process in a pressure canner for the pressure/time recommended by USDA at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation>. Or the **Ball Blue Book**.

This are the only safe ways to preserve squash or pumpkin. Canning cubes, chunks or pureed squash or pie filling in a hot water bath canner is not safe because the heat from a water bath canner cannot penetrate the squash evenly enough to assure that it kills the botulism spores. Only the pressure canner can bring the canned squash to that safe temperature for the specific time that kills botulism spores. Without this processing, squash is a place where botulism can grow.

Cook it fresh! Thousands of recipes available from your farmer, your grandmother, neighbor, friend, the extension service or the internet.

- Simplest? Serve steamed, boiled or roasted with butter, salt and pepper or a dollop of brown sugar butter. Or just butter.
- Use in soups, stews for its own flavor,
- Use pureed squash in place of banana or zucchini in your favorite bread or cake recipe or cookie recipes.
- Add to smoothies for a sweet, earthy note to your favorite combination of vegetables or fruits.
- And who can forget PIE! Try squash in place of pumpkin for your favorite pie. Or better yet, make both kinds!
- Baby food. Squash can be missed with banana or apple sauce.

Savory Sweet Squash Soup

1 medium butternut squash or large acorn squash or pumpkin or Kabocha or Red Kuri, etc, etc.
½ medium onion chopped
2-3 cloves of garlic, smashed
2 medium tart apples, peeled and chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
½ teaspoon Ground cumin, ¼ tsp ground coriander
Honey to taste
Salt & pepper to taste
Cayenne pepper or hot sauce to taste

Seed the squash, brush meat with some of the olive oil and bake in oiled pan at 375 degrees for 30 -60 minutes until soft. Scrape meat and discard skins. Or you can use some of your frozen mashed squash, (about 2 cups). Sauté onions in a heavy bottomed soup kettle until translucent, adding garlic cloves and chopped apple. Cook until apples are soft. Add squash and spices and stir. Add stock to cover the mixture by ½ inch. Simmer for 10-15 minutes. Blend thoroughly using an immersion blender until smooth and velvety. Taste, add salt and pepper and honey to taste.

Variations may include: adding ¼ cup peanut butter or tahini or coconut milk into the soup for flavor and richness.

Toppings suggestions: each bowl of soup with choice of a drizzle of good olive oil, a few toasted pine nuts or peanuts, toasted squash seeds, grated hard cheese, chopped parsley or cilantro, fried sage leaves, fresh thyme, crumbled crispy bacon, a spoon of tahini. Add a good crusty loaf of bread and you have a meal. Serves 4-6. Adapted from <http://www.theawl.com> Do Not Roast the Squash

Leek, Potato and Delicata Squash Soup

3 large leeks, sliced thin white parts and soft green parts
3 Tablespoons butter

2 cups chicken stock
1# potatoes, peeled and diced ½ inch
1# delicate squash, peeled and diced ½ inch
Salt and pepper to taste

Trim off roots ends and tough green tops of the leeks. Clean thoroughly by cutting lengthwise in quarters, separating leaves in clear water. Cut into ¼ inch slices. Sauté leeks in butter over medium-low heat in a medium stock pot until soft and translucent, not browned, about 10 minutes.

Add stock, squash and potatoes. Bring to simmer over high heat, reduce heat and simmer covered until potatoes tender, about 20-30 minutes. Puree with an immersion blender in the pot or transfer to a blender, making sure lid held down so hot liquid does not splatter. Return puree to pot if using blender. Add salt and pepper to taste, remove cover, and continue to simmer over low heat until soup is somewhat reduced and thickened, about 20-30 minutes. Serve hot with a drizzle of olive or nut oil and garnished with toasted squash seeds. Serves 4-6. Freezes well for up to 6 months so you can easily double the recipe for a cold winter day. AAH. Adapted from: <http://localkitchenblog.com>

Sweet and Spicy Roasted Vegetables

Roasting sauce:

½ tsp ground Cumin
½ tsp ground Coriander
½ tsp ground ginger
½ tsp salt
½ tsp cayenne pepper
¼ tsp ground cinnamon
1 Tbsps. honey
2 Tbsps. olive oil

2 small onions,
2 medium red bell peppers, seeded and cut into 1 inch squares
1 ½ pounds butternut squash, delicata, red Kuri or kabocha or sweet potatoes, peeled, seeded and cut into 1 inch cubes about 3 cups, fresh or frozen
5 medium carrots, peeled, halved lengthwise and cut into 1 inch pieces
1 Tbsps. fresh thyme leaves.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk together the cumin, coriander, ginger, salt, cayenne, cinnamon, honey and olive oil. Leaving the root on, cut each onion in half lengthwise and peel. Cut into 4 wedges with part of root holding it together. Place onion wedges, red bell peppers, butternut squash and carrot into the bowl with spices and toss to coat evenly. Put the vegetables onto a baking sheet in a single layer and cook for 25 minutes. Stir in the thyme leaves and cook for 25 minutes more, until vegetables are tender. Tent with foil to keep warm until ready to serve. 4 servings.

Squash and Chickpea Soup

2 Tablespoons olive oil
2 medium onions, roughly chopped
4 garlic cloves
1 teaspoon ground cumin
2# (5-6 cups of diced pumpkin or squash, fresh or frozen)
3 cups of chickpeas or 2 15 oz. cans of garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
6 cups stock
2 tablespoons tomato paste
2 tablespoons fresh or dried cilantro
Dash of tabasco to taste

Heat oil or butter in medium stock pot or Dutch oven; sauté onions and garlic over medium-low heat until onions are translucent, about 10 minutes. Add cumin and sauté', stirring for a minute or until fragrant. Add pumpkin and chickpeas; sauté for another 5 minutes. Add the stock, tomato paste, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer over low heat until pumpkin/squash begins to fall apart, about 30-45 minutes. Blend soup with an immersion blender in the pot or transfer to blender/food processor to

puree. Stir in cilantro (or Parsley) and harissa, Tabasco or chili pepper sauce of choice. Adjust seasonings to taste. Simmer, uncovered over low heat until soup is thickened to your liking, stirring occasionally.

Serve hot, garnished with additional herbs, chickpeas, or grated hard cheese.

Sources:

Oregon State Extension Service- Food Safety: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation>

National Center for Home Food Preservation: http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_04/pumpkin_winter_squash

Local Kitchen Blog <http://localkitchenblog.com>

All Recipes: <http://allrecipes.com> Search engine of recipes by ingredient

Food Network: <http://foodnetwork.com> Search for recipes by ingredient or type of recipe

The Awl Food Blog: <http://www.theawl.com> Do Not Roast the Squash

<http://www.gardenbetty.com/2014/08/curing-your-winter-squash-for-storage/#jVAORw7CmBebIsPb.99>