



# WINTER SQUASH

## Healthy Serving Hints

- ◆ Puree cooked squash and top with cinnamon and maple syrup.
- ◆ Toss cubed butternut squash with olive oil, honey, and cinnamon and bake.
- ◆ Halve an acorn squash, bake, and fill the hollow with wild rice.
- ◆ Puree and use in muffins.
- ◆ Puree and use to create a rich, yet healthy soup.
- ◆ Roast the seeds for a perfect snack.
- ◆ Puree and substitute for mashed potatoes.
- ◆ Roast and add to salads.

## Home Grown History

Winter squash are gourds belonging to the *Cucurbita* genus, the same family as summer squash (such as zucchini and cucumbers). There are several varieties of winter squash, including acorn, butternut, Hubbard, pumpkin, and spaghetti. Winter squash is one of the oldest cultivated crops in the Americas. Seeds found in Mexico have been dated to be 10,000 years old.



In the Americas, squash was one of the three primary crops, the other two being corn and beans. Squash, beans, and corn were known as the “Three Sisters” by some American Indians. These plants were staples to many American Indian tribes. They provided a nutritional balance of carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins. In addition, the three crops support each other when planted in the same garden. Corn stalks provide a growing structure for climbing beans, and the beans improve the soil for the corn and squash. Squash plants have thorny vines and broad leaves to help protect the corn and beans and minimize weeds.

European conquerors carried the squash back across the Atlantic. Winter squash never caught on in the more northern parts of Europe though, as the climate was too cool, and the season did not last long enough to properly grow them. France and Spain are two European countries which have embraced the squash and produced many unique varieties.

## Picking Produce

Choose winter squash that are firm and heavy. They should have dull, not glossy rinds that are hard. Avoid squash that show any signs of decay. Depending on the variety, they will stay good between one week and six months.

***This month, squash was purchased from:***

## BUTTERNUT SQUASH MASH

Makes 7 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 large butternut squashes, peeled, seeded, cut into  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch chunks
- 1 c water
- Pepper, herbs (optional)

Directions:

1. Heat oil in large pot over medium-high heat and add squash and salt.
2. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until squash is partially tender (8 minutes).
3. Add water, cover, and simmer over medium-high heat until completely tender and water is mostly evaporated.
4. Mash with a potato masher and season as desired.

Recipe retrieved from <http://www.marthastewart.com>

## Fun Facts

- ◆ The word *squash* comes from the Narragansett Native American word askutasquash, which means “eaten raw.” However, winter squash is almost never eaten raw.
- ◆ Besides the fruit, other edible parts of squash plants include the seeds, shoots, leaves, tendrils, and blossoms.

## Health Benefits

Not many foods are as comforting, flavorful, and nutritious as the winter squash. Whether your favorite is pumpkin, butternut, or acorn, they all have an abundance of noteworthy health perks. Winter squash is a wonderful source of vitamin A, which is important for good vision and immune function. This vitamin A comes from natural carotenoids found in winter squash, which are powerful disease-fighting and anti-cancer compounds that give fruits and vegetables their bright red, orange, or yellow color. In fact, no single food on Earth provides a greater percentage of certain carotenoids than winter squash! The antioxidants found in these hearty vegetables protect our cells from damage and help to alleviate some symptoms of achy joints, which are related to inflammation. While only containing a small amount of fat, winter squash is actually a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. These are absolutely crucial for optimal health and also help reduce inflammation in the body. This powerful combination of health benefits, as well as the many varieties to try, make winter squash perfect for long Wisconsin winters!

### How many vegetables do I need?

Children 2-3 years	Children 4-8 years	Females 9-13 years	Females 14-50 years	Females 51+ years	Males 9-13 years	Males 14-50 years	Males 51+ years
1 cup	1 ½ cups	2 cups	2 ½ cups	2 cups	2 ½ cups	3 cups	2 ½ cups

The amount of fruit and vegetables you need to eat depends on age, sex, and level of physical activity. These are average recommended daily amounts for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity. Individuals may require more or less than the recommended daily amounts depending on lifestyle and health conditions.



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