

WINTER SQUASH



Winter squash is in season from September through October.

Tips for selecting winter squash

Types of winter squash include acorn, butternut, buttercup, Hubbard, and spaghetti. Choose squash that are firm and have a hard, tough skin that is free of cracks and soft spots. The skin of winter squash should be dull. Winter squash that have shiny skin are immature and not sweet. There is no such thing as an oversized winter squash. One pound serves two adults. Select the size that suits your needs.

Storage

Winter squash can be stored uncut in a cool, dry place. Do not store in a refrigerator. Winter squash can keep up to three months.

Preparation

Scrub and wash dirt from the skin with cold water. Some types of winter squash can be difficult to cut. When cutting winter squash, use a heavy knife, cut the squash in half lengthwise, and scoop out the seeds. For squash that are impossible to cut before cooking, cook them whole.

Key nutrients

- Carbohydrates for energy
- Vitamin A for vision, healthy skin, and resistance to infection

Serving suggestions

Steam or bake squash, then cool, peel, and puree; you can mash the squash with a potato masher, fork, or food processor. Serve as a side dish or add to soups or stews.

Recipes

Baked squash

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cut squash in half lengthwise and scoop out seeds. For larger squash, cut into serving-size pieces. Place squash cut side down, pour ¼ inch of water into pan, then cover and bake until squash feels tender when pierced with a fork. For squash that is difficult to cut, pierce squash with a fork and cook until tender (judged by piercing with a fork). ½ cup serving; 40 Cal; no fat.

Cheddar-stuffed acorn squash

- 1 acorn squash, halved and seeded
- ¾ cup chopped ripe tomato
- 2 scallions or green onions thinly sliced
- ¼ teaspoon dried sage
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons water
- ½ cup cheddar cheese cut into small cubes

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place the squash halves in a roasting pan cut side up. Add about an inch of water to the bottom of the pan. Combine tomatoes and scallions or onions. Season with sage and salt and pepper to taste; mix well and divide the mixture evenly among the squash halves. Spoon 1 tablespoon of water over each and cover loosely with aluminum foil. Cook for 1 to 1½ hours or until squash is tender when pierced by a fork. Divide cheese cubes evenly on top of squash halves and cook for 5 more minutes or until cheese is melted. Serves 4; 115 Cal; 5.5 g fat.



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