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Winter squash are good to excellent sources of Vitamin A, beta-carotene, potassium, vitamin C and fiber. Each type varies in texture, aroma and flavor. Winter squash can be prepared with sweet or savory flavors. Winter squash also contains niacin, folate, and iron. Winter squash goes well with meats, fruits, and other vegetables. Winter squash is low in calories. It is fat free and cholesterol free.

What’s So Great about Winter Squash?

Selecting and Storing Winter Squash

Winter squash is harvested when fully mature in September and October. It is widely available until late winter.

Look for
▷ A hard, tough rind with the stem attached.
▷ Squash that is heavy for its size (meaning a thick wall and plenty of edible flesh).

Avoid
Squash with cuts, punctures, sunken spots, or moldy spots on the rind. These are signs of decay. A tender rind means that the squash is not ripe. Unripe squash lacks flavor.

Storage
Winter squash can keep for up to three months if stored in a cool dry place. Squash stores best with part of the stem still attached to help retain its moisture.

Once cut open, store squash wrapped in plastic in the refrigerator for 4 to 5 days.
Cooked squash can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 4 to 5 days.
Frozen cooked squash stays fresh for up to a year.
Varieties of Winter Squash

Winter squash is found in many varieties. Winter squash varies in size from small acorn to pumpkin that reaches up to 200 pounds. Flavor differs widely from very mild to very sweet.

**Acorn**
*Appearance:* Dark green, hard skin  
*Flesh:* Firm, yellow-orange flesh  
*Flavor:* Sweet flavor  
*Key Nutrients:* Good source of potassium, but not as high in vitamin A as other varieties

**Butternut**
*Appearance:* Beige-tan skin that is not as hard as acorn squash  
*Flesh:* Orange flesh  
*Flavor:* Mildly sweet flavor  
*Key Nutrients:* Excellent source of beta-carotene and vitamin A

**Delicata**
*Appearance:* Long cylindrical shape; cream color with dark green stripes  
*Flesh:* A creamy pulp that tastes a bit like sweet potatoes  
*Flavor:* Very sweet  
*Key Nutrients:* Contains vitamin A

**Hubbard**
*Appearance:* Plump in the middle and slightly tapered at the neck. Their bumpy skin varies in color from dark green to light blue to orange  
*Flesh:* Because of its fine-grained texture, the yellow-orange flesh is often mashed or pureed  
*Flavor:* Mild flavor  
*Key Nutrients:* Excellent source of vitamin A, good source of potassium

**Pumpkin**
*Appearance:* Orange skin. Their size ranges from very small to very large  
*Flesh:* Orange flesh  
*Flavor:* Sweet mild flavor  
*Key Nutrients:* Excellent source of beta-carotene and vitamin A

**Spaghetti**
*Appearance:* Bright yellow skin  
*Flesh:* Golden yellow flesh with a crisp texture  
*Flavor:* Mild nutlike flavor  
*Key Nutrients:* Not as high in vitamin A and beta-carotene as other varieties
Preparation Tips

**Baking:** This method brings out the sweetness in winter squash. Baking also saves the beta-carotene content. To bake, halve small squash lengthwise. Then scoop out the seeds and strings. Cut large squash into serving-sized pieces. Place the squash, cut-side down, in a foil-lined baking pan. The foil will help avoid sugary juices burning onto the pan. Pour about 1/4” of water into the pan, cover with foil, and bake in a 350°F to 400°F oven until the squash is tender when pierced with a knife or toothpick. Cooking time for squash halves will be 40 to 45 minutes. Cut-up squash will take 15 to 25 minutes.

**Boiling:** This method is faster than steaming. Boiling can dilute the flavor of the squash and cause some nutrient loss. Place peeled squash pieces in a small amount of boiling water. Cook until the squash is tender. Drain well. Cooking times is 5 minutes.

**Sautéing:** Grate, peel or dice squash. Sauté in broth or in a mix of broth and oil until desired tenderness. Tip: Grated squash is best if it is cooked just to the point where it is still slightly crunchy. Cooking time is 8 to 15 minutes.

**Steaming:** Place a metal colander or basket over a pot with about an inch of water in it. Place seeded squash halves or squash pieces in the colander cut-side down. Cover the pot. Cook over boiling water until tender. Cooking time is 15 to 20 minutes.

**Microwaving:** Arrange squash halves, cut-side up, in a shallow microwaveable dish. Cover, and cook until tender. Let the squash stand for 5 minutes after cooking. Cooking time for squash halves is 7 to 10 minutes. Cooking time for chunks is 6 to 8 minutes.

**Pureeing:** All squash varieties can be pureéd. Cook squash using the methods above. Then place cooked squash in a blender. If you don’t have a blender, you can mash the squash. Pureéd squash can be used in recipes for baked goods, soups, custards, or as a side dish in place of potatoes.

**Freezing:** Cooked squash freezes well. Pack into freezer containers or freezer bags leaving 1/2 inch head space. Frozen squash stays fresh for up to one year.

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**Fitting Winter Squash into MyPyramid**

The **GREEN** triangle of MyPyramid is the vegetable section. Vegetables may be raw or cooked, fresh, frozen, or canned. Age, gender, and level of physical activity determine the daily vegetable need. For a 2000 calorie diet, it is recommended having about 2 ½ cups of vegetables daily. On MyPyramid, winter squash is an orange vegetable. For a 2000 calorie diet, it is recommended having about 2 cups of orange vegetables per week. For more information on vegetable serving sizes visit www.mypyramid.gov.

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**Nutrition Facts**

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*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

©www.NutritionData.com
Recipe Collection

Savory Squash Soup
Makes 6 servings

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 2 chopped onions
- 2 chopped carrots
- 2 minced garlic cloves
- 1 cup canned tomato puree
- 5 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 4 cups cooked winter squash
- 1 ½ Tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 ½ Tablespoon dried basil

**InStruCtIonS**
1. In a large saucepan, warm oil over medium heat.
2. Stir in onions, carrots and garlic.
3. Cook for about 5 minutes, covered.
4. Stir in the tomato puree, chicken broth, cooked squash, and herbs.
5. Bring soup to a simmer and cook, covered, for 30 minutes.

**Estimated Cost:** Per Recipe: $4.42  
Per Serving: $0.74

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Honey Acorn Squash
½ Acorn Squash

**INGREDIENTS**
- 3 acorn squash
- 2 Tablespoons orange juice
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 cups butter or margarine
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg (optional)

**InStruCtIonS**
1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Cut squash in half. Remove seeds and place halves in shallow baking pan. Combine orange juice and honey. Mix well. Put some of the orange juice/honey mixture in each squash cavity. Add 1 teaspoon of the margarine to each squash half. Sprinkle with nutmeg, if desired.
2. Cover pan with aluminum foil to keep steam in.
3. Bake 30 minutes. Remove foil and continue baking 30 minutes more, or until squash is tender.

**Options:** Substitute any other winter squash for the acorn squash. Cooking time may vary depending on the type of squash used.

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Fall Casserole
Makes 4 servings

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 ½ cups winter squash, such as acorn, butternut or hubbard
- 1 ½ cups cooking apples, such as Macintosh, Granny Smith or Rome
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

**InStruCtIonS**
1. Wash and prepare squash and apples (for extra fiber, keep peel on apples).
2. Alternate layers of squash and apples in an 8x8 inch pan; end with apples.
3. Sprinkle spices over top layer.
4. Cover with aluminum foil.
5. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 45-60 minutes, until squash is tender.

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**Nutrition Facts**

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<td>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</td>
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<td>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</td>
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University of the District of Columbia, Center for Nutrition, Diet and Health
Grow Your Own
Winter Squash

Plant winter squash in the spring. It grows all summer and should be picked at the mature stage in early autumn before the first frost. Squash plants are either “vine” or “bush” types.

- For “vine” types, plant seeds one inch deep. Allow plenty of space for these plants to grow, about 7 to 12 feet between rows.
- For “bush” types, allow about 5 feet between rows.

Squash plants require minimal care after the vines cover the ground. Keep plants free from weeds. Winter squash can be picked when the squash have turned a deep, solid color and the rind is hard. Pick the main part of the crop in September or October, before heavy frost hits. Cut the squash with two inches of stem remaining. A stem cut too short is like an open wound, which will cause early decay. If picked too early, the squash will lack flavor.

For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Educator in the phone book or at http://www.extension.psu.edu/.

ACTIVITY ALLEY
Winter Squash Coloring Activity

Directions: Pumpkin is a common winter squash. Not all pumpkins should be eaten. Below are some ways that pumpkins are used. Color the pictures below and circle the pumpkin foods that are good to eat.
Find the Winter Squash

**Directions:** There are hundreds of varieties of winter squash. Below some common winter squash varieties are listed. Try to find them in the puzzle below.

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T H B S S X L C D A U N A V Z A E W A O
O U A J L G M Q Q Q K Q A N Q W M Z T A
V B N K P R H Y R D U G B N J A J S Y
Y B N R Z D Q W Y J U L Y I R B V U E B
O A D Q E I Z F V V H M A D A U X M Q B
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X D Y E N W T A N I R G A L Q B S B D Z
C P E O V D Y U Q T O C O Q I S Q V B A
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S Y H E O D K A N E A Y G W B K G T R S
H U T H K Y A L H H R B E C O V Y T X E
W H Q G C O H G O G B I M X E W P S K H
D Z F M G T P Q C A U D T E M M V Y M U
B W E O K U A E O P W Q N C S Z H P D K
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I I Y T K I M X Y A T M G Q F H C L Z
N Z N W U L R B D E L I C A T A Q W U S
A N A N A B T O V T P H D K W X D H B C
```

- Acorn
- Banana
- Buttercup
- Butternut
- Calabaza
- Delicata
- Dimpling
- Hubbard
- Pumpkin
- Spaghetti
- Sweet
- Turban
References


Nutrition for Everyone: Eat Your Fruits and Vegetables, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Center for Disease Control and Prevention: May 2008.


