



WINTER SQUASH

IN THE CAFETERIA

New Hampshire Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods. www.nhharvestofthemonth.org

Tidbit

Winter squash is true to its name: it stores well throughout the winter! The flesh of these fruits is yellow-orange, with variations in taste and texture. Purée it for a scrumptious soup or roast with a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Cooking Tips

- To ease prep, cook winter squash in its skin whenever possible.
- To make peeling easier, halve or quarter winter squash.
- Save the seeds—toss with olive oil and salt, then bake at 375°F for 20 minutes.
- Sweet potatoes can be replaced by winter squash in many recipes.

RECIPES

Butternut Squash Squared

Yield: 50 half-cup servings of red/orange vegetable

Ingredients:

- 10 lbs butternut squash, peeled and cut into 1 inch pieces
- 10 lbs sweet potato (or a different variety of winter squash) peeled and cut into 1 inch pieces
- 2 cups olive or vegetable oil
- 2 Tbsp. onion powder
- 2 Tbsp. dried basil
- 1 cup maple syrup
- 1 Tbsp. each of salt and pepper

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (convection) or 400°F (conventional).
2. Peel winter squash and sweet potato and cut into one-inch pieces. Make sure they are the same size so that they roast evenly.
3. In a large bowl, mix together oil, maple syrup, onion powder, basil, salt and black pepper.
4. Toss squash in the mixture, then spread in one layer on sheet pan.
5. Roast the squash uncovered, making sure to toss them occasionally so they cook evenly. Roast until soft but not mushy at 400°F for 30-40 minutes.
6. Toss and continue roasting until just starting to brown, about 20 more minutes.

Source: Massachusetts Farm to School Cookbook, edited by GMFTS

Delicata Squash Smiles

Yield: 50 half-cup servings of red/orange vegetable

Ingredients:

- 14 lbs delicata squash
- ½ cup olive or vegetable oil
- cinnamon (optional)
- salt and pepper, to taste

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Cut squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds. Place squash open side down on cutting board and cut short "smiles."
3. Place smiles in a bowl. Add oil, salt (and pepper, if desired) and toss until evenly coated.
4. Place on baking sheet, sprinkle with cinnamon (if desired), and roast in oven for 15-20 minutes or until a fork goes through easily.

Source: GMFTS

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Selection

To select a fully-ripe squash at the peak of its flavor, look for firm, dull-colored skin. A fully-ripe squash will be heavy for its size. If the squash is too young, the skin will be shiny and the flesh less flavorful; if it is too old, the skin will be crinkled and the flesh fibrous.

Storage Tips

- **Winter storage:** Remove all dirt and leave on a portion of the stem. Store out of the sunlight, between 50-60°F, with good ventilation. Depending on the variety, winter squash can be stored between 1-6 months.
- Refrigerate winter squash only if it has been cut or cooked.
- **To freeze:** Cook and purée, then place in a labeled and dated freezer-grade bag.

Benefits

Winter squash is an excellent source of vitamin A, the mineral potassium and carotene pigments; it is a good source of vitamin B1 (thiamine), B5 (pantothenic acid), B9 (folic acid) and C, as well as dietary fiber and the mineral copper.

Sources: *The Visual Food Encyclopedia*, *The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods*, GMFTS

Kid-Friendly Eating Tips

- Make it savory: cube, add olive oil, your favorite dried herb, salt and pepper, then roast; add to a salad, taco, rice dish, omelet or mac and cheese.
- Make it sweet: slice, add olive oil, maple syrup and/or cinnamon.
- Halve squashes, roast upside down, then add a stuffing.
- Purée roasted squash for a soup or pie!

Mini Activities

- Guess the number of seeds in different varieties of squash.
- Taste test roasted winter squash with various seasonings, such as, dried basil, oregano or rosemary, maple syrup and cinnamon.

VARIETIES OF WINTER SQUASH:

