



Winter Squash

Illinois-grown winter squash is available September through November.

Squash is Good for You

Winter squash is ...

- an excellent source of beta-carotene which the body uses to make vitamin A
- a good source of fiber and vitamin C
- low in calories.

How to Buy Winter Squash

Look for firm squash that feels heavy for its size. Rinds should have a dull sheen and be intact and hard. Slight variations in color are not important.

If the stem is still attached, it should be rounded and dry, not shriveled, blackened or moist.

Do not buy squash that is soft or has a cracked, watery, decayed or shiny rind.

A small winter squash provides about 2 servings. With large squash a pound yields about 4 half-cup servings of cooked pieces, or 1½ cups mashed.

How to Store Winter Squash

Do not wash winter squash before storing. Most varieties will keep up to 3 months if stored in a cool, dry place. However, spaghetti squash has a shorter storage life, about 2 months. Hubbard squash keeps well up to 6 months.

If squash is sold in cut pieces, store in plastic wrap or a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use within a week.

How to Use Winter Squash

There are many varieties of winter squash. Most are eaten cooked. Their hard shells and seeds are not eaten. All winter squash bakes well (see back page.) Steaming works for cut pieces. Most varieties have a sweet, buttery, firm flesh and can be substituted for one another in recipes, with the exception of spaghetti squash.

Acorn squash is good for baking and goes well with sweet, nutty or spice stuffings.



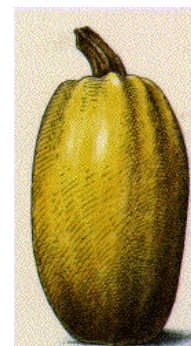
Cooked **butternut squash**, with its fine-grained flesh is perfect for pureeing.



Hubbard squash grows so large that it is often sold as cut pieces. After cooking it mashes well. It can be frozen or used in breads, muffins, pancakes and soups.



After baking **spaghetti squash**, lift out the sweet mild-tasting, tender, crunchy strands and serve like pasta.



This information provided by U of I Extension

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Winter Squash Recipes

Baked Squash...2 ways

Serves 4 per pound

Baked Whole

Wash squash and pierce several times with a knife. Place in a baking dish, and bake, uncovered.

If using a conventional oven, the baking temperatures can vary between 325° and 400°F. This is handy if you want to use the oven to bake another food at the same time. You save time and energy by the two foods sharing the oven. Baking time will vary according to the temperature of the oven and the size of the squash. A small squash at higher temperature may be done in 45 minutes. A large squash at a low cooking temperature may take 1½ hours.

If using a microwave, cook on full power 6-7 minutes. Rotate and turn squash over. Cook for another 6 to 7 minutes.

Test for doneness by pushing on the rind with a potholder. Squash is done when it “gives” slightly. Remove from oven and let stand 10 minutes or until cool enough to handle. Cup open and remove strings and seeds.

* It is ready for mashing or serving as pieces with a little margarine or seasoning. It will freeze well for future use.

* If baking spaghetti squash remove seeds and gently lift out strands. Top with your favorite pasta sauce.

Baked Halved or Cut

Wash and cut squash lengthwise or into pieces. Remove seeds and, unless cooking spaghetti squash, the strings as well. Lightly brush cut surfaces with oil or melted margarine. Sprinkle with brown sugar or Parmesan cheese, if desired. Place in baking dish with a few tablespoons of water and bake until tender.

If using a conventional oven, bake at 350°F. uncovered, about 30 minutes. Oven temperature (and time) can vary, as described above.

If using a microwave, cover and bake on full power 6 to 7 minutes. Rotate. Bake another 6 to 7 minutes.

Mashed Winter Squash

Serves 2 per cup

Winter squash, any variety except spaghetti.
Each pound will yield about 1½ cups cooked, mashed squash.

For every cup of mashed squash...

2 Tbsp. margarine
1 tsp. brown sugar
¼ tsp. salt
⅛ tsp. ginger
2 to 4 Tbsp. orange juice

Calories: 120 per ½ cup

Fat: 4 grams per ½ cup

Directions:

Wash and bake the squash according to one of the above methods. Mash the cooked squash. Measure how much mashed squash you have and determine the amount of remaining ingredients needed.

Mix in the margarine, brown sugar, salt and ginger. Mix in the orange juice, a tablespoon at a time, until squash is the consistency you like.