

VIVA WINTER SQUASH: A plethora of sizes, shapes and colors – all tasty and nutritious.

Cutting Winter Squash:

A few types of squash (such as Butternut) can be peeled with a sharp vegetable peeler, but this doesn't work well on squash with ridges or bumpy skin. Most winter squash varieties have very tough, hard skins – so it's easier to cook them with the skin on.

- Cut squash in half. Always use a sharp knife with a long blade for safety. Use a spoon to scrape out seeds and stringy fibers.
- Some squash varieties with thinner skins (such as Delicata and Butternut) are quite easy to cut.
- Large squash with tough skins (such as Hubbards) can be difficult to cut. To keep things safe, work on a flat surface.
- Cut into the squash and bear down. Cut next to the stem rather than through it.
- If a squash is too tough to cut and will fit into your oven or microwave, you can bake or microwave the squash just until it's soft enough to cut into pieces.
- As a last resort – you can always drop large, tough squash on the floor to break them open. Messy – but effective! Consider placing squash in a plastic trash bag before dropping it to contain the mess.



Cooking Winter Squash:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place squash pieces on a cookie sheet. Optional: line the cookie sheet with foil for easier clean-up.
- There are two methods to bake squash – try both to see which you prefer for different varieties of squash.
 - 1) Rub squash with a little olive oil and bake uncovered. This will provide a “roasted” flavor and some browned, caramelized sections.
 - 2) Add about ½ C of water to the pan and cover with foil. This method results in moister “steamed” squash.
- Whichever method you use, check for tenderness with fork after about 45 minutes. This is probably long enough for smaller squash, but larger squash may need up to 90 minutes to become tender.
- Squash can also be microwaved until fork-tender.
- When tender, squash can be cubed or mashed.



Seasoning Winter Squash:

Many varieties of winter squash are so flavorful and sweet that they taste delicious with just a little salt and pepper and a bit of butter or olive oil. Or, try some of these suggestions for a nice change.

- For a “sweet” side dish: Season squash with spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, or ginger. Spice blends such as pumpkin pie spices or apple pie spices work well, too. Drizzle with honey or maple syrup, or add a bit of butter and brown sugar.
- For a “savory” side dish: Season squash with chili powder, garlic, grated cheese, or herbs such as parsley, oregano, or sage. Add a little butter or a drizzle of olive oil.
- To adjust consistency, add some milk or cream, orange juice, or apple juice.
- Season with salt and pepper as desired.

Freezing Leftover Cooked Squash:

Never throw cooked squash away! Cook as much as you can fit into your oven at once, and freeze leftovers in meal-sized amounts in freezer bags or containers. Move containers from the freezer into the fridge in the morning, and the squash will be thawed and ready to heat (or add to another recipe) by dinnertime.

Spaghetti Squash with Marinara

Turn spaghetti squash into dinner!
Serve this simple recipe with salad and crusty bread.

Ingredients:

2 cups cooked spaghetti squash
1 cup prepared marinara sauce
2 T grated parmesan cheese

Directions:

Place hot squash on plate.
Cover with hot marinara sauce.
Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.



Spaghetti Squash with Mushrooms and Herbs

Ingredients:

2 ½ lb spaghetti squash
2 tablespoons butter
¼ cup finely chopped onions
2 cups thinly sliced mushrooms
1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley leaves
2 tablespoons minced fresh chives
¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Cook whole squash in microwave for 3-4 minutes to soften. Remove from microwave and cut in half lengthwise. Remove seeds using a large spoon. Place squash halves face down in a large baking dish; add water to about 1 inch depth. Bake in the oven for about 45 minutes to 1 hour (or in the microwave for 10-12 minutes) until it feels soft when pressed. Let the squash stand for 5 minutes. While the squash is cooling, cook the butter, onion and mushrooms in the microwave for about 5 minutes until the mushrooms are soft, stirring once after 2-3 minutes. Scrape the flesh of the squash into a bowl using a fork or spoon, and toss it with the mushroom mixture, parsley, chives, Parmesan cheese, and salt and pepper to taste.



Developed by Utah State University Dietetics Program Faculty:

Janet Anderson, MS RD
janet.anderson@usu.edu

Tamara Vitale, MS RD
tamara.vitale@usu.edu

Produced by:

Dennis Hinkamp, Extension Communications
Utah State University
dennis.hinkamp@usu.edu

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