

Squash is a term used to describe many varieties of the Cucurbita genus. Summer squash, such as zucchinis, yellow crooknecks and patty pans and are harvested as immature fruit when skin and flesh is tender and can be eaten raw. Winter squash, such as pumpkin, acorn, spaghetti, delicata, and butternut are harvested when the seeds are developed, the skin has hardened and the fruits are mature. While summer varieties are a seasonal favourite, winter varieties are a staple of northern pantries as they can be stored year-round after harvest.

NUTRITION

Squash is a starchy vegetable that is rich in vitamins A and C and a good source of potassium, fibre and omega 3 fatty acids. Squash are extremely rich in antioxidant carotenoids, proving health benefits for skin and eyes and strong anti-cancer properties – the richer the colour of squash, the higher the likely carotenoid content. Because of their water content, summer squash are less nutritionally dense than winter squash.

HOW TO SELECT

SUMMER SQUASH: select small fruits that are heavy for their size with shiny, soft skins.

WINTER SQUASH: select fruits that are firm and heavy for their size, with dull skin. Avoid squash that is blemished or shows signs of decay.

HOW TO PREPARE

RAW: Zucchinis are the best squash eaten raw. Grate them into salads, on top of sandwiches, or into muffin mixes. Slice them up for snacking with a tasty dip.

COOKED: Summer squash makes an excellent addition to stir-fry. Winter squash can be steamed, baked, roasted, and simmered or pureed in soups. Squash seeds can be saved and toasted as a tasty snack.

SIMPLE BUTTERNUT SQUASH RECIPE

BUTTERNUT SQUASH, ONION, GRANNY SMITH APPLE, CARROT, SOUP STOCK, OIL, SALT & PEPPER

1. Peel squash, remove stem, cut squash in half lengthwise, scoop out pulp and seeds.
2. Chop squash into 1 inch cubes and add to steamer basket. Steam for 15 min.
3. Clean, peel and chop onion, carrots and apple.
4. In a large saucepan, add oil and sauté onions, carrots and apple for 5-7 min.
5. Add soup stock and cooked squash to saucepan. Simmer for 30 min. Add salt & pepper to taste.
6. Allow soup to cool and transfer to blender. Puree. Reheat and serve.
7. Optional: Top with sour cream and chives. Try adding nutmeg or curry powder to the soup.