

# LOVE THAT WINTER SQUASH

## GARDENING SEASON

September to October Types of winter squash include acorn, butternut, buttercup, Hubbard, and spaghetti.

## CHOOSING TIPS

Choose squash that are firm, have a hard, tough skin, free of cracks or soft spots. The skin of winter squash should be dull. Squash that have a shiny skin are immature and not sweet. The size you pick depends on your needs. There is no such thing as an oversized winter squash. One pound serves 2.

## STORAGE

Winter squash can be stored uncut in a cool, dry place. Do not store in a refrigerator. They can keep up to three months.

## PREPARATION

Scrub and wash dirt off skin with cold water. Some types of winter squash can be difficult to cut. When cutting squash use a heavy knife, cut in half (lengthwise), and scoop out seeds. For squash that are impossible to cut before cooking, cook them whole.

## KEY NUTRIENTS

- ★ Vitamin A for vision, healthy skin, and resistance to infection.
- ★ Carbohydrates for energy.

## SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Steam or bake squash, then cool, peel, and puree; you can mash the squash with a potato masher, fork or food processor. Serve steamed or baked squash as a side dish or add to soups or stews.



## RECIPES

### Baked Squash

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Cut squash in half lengthwise and scoop out seeds. For larger squash, cut into serving size pieces. Place



squash cut side down, pour  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of water into pan, cover and bake until squash feels tender when pierced with a knife. For squash that is difficult to cut, pierce squash with a fork and cook until tender (judged by piercing with a fork).  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup serving; 40 Cal; no fat.

### Cheddar Stuffed Acorn Squash

1 acorn squash, halved and seeded

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped ripe tomato

2 scallions, or green onions thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon dried sage

Salt and black pepper to taste

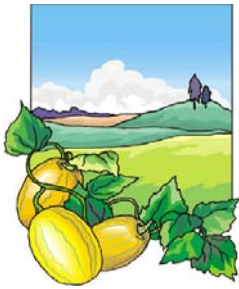
2 tablespoons water

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup cheddar cheese cut into small cubes

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place the squash halves in a roasting pan, cut side up. Add about an inch of water to the bottom of the pan. Combine tomatoes and scallions or onions. Season with sage and salt and pepper to taste; mix well and divide the mixture evenly among the squash halves. Spoon 1 tablespoon of water over each and cover loosely with aluminum foil. Cook for 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours, or until squash is tender when pierced by a fork. Divide cheese cubes evenly on top of squash halves, cook 5 more minutes (until cheese is melted), and serve. Serves 4; 115 Cal; 5.5g fat.

## Growing Squash in Wisconsin

Squash, pumpkins, cucumbers, and melons are all members of the Cucurbit family. Cucurbits are warm season annuals. Plants are



monoecious and bear both male and female flower. Honey bees are important for pollination. Squash can cross pollinate with crops of the same species of squash. For example, an acorn squash can cross pollinate with a delicata, but not a butternut. These vine crops are an excellent choice for bring weed-infested areas into production.

### Planting Squash

- Squash require full sun, heat, and a long growing season
- Vine crops are challenging to transplant
- Transplant after all risk of frost has passed and soil temperature is 60°F
- Seed in northern Wisconsin around June 1
- Seeding depth: 1 to 1 1/2 inches deep
- Summer Squash
  - Space between rows: 48 to 60 inches
  - Space between plants: 24 to 48 inches
- Winter Squash
  - Space between rows: 72 to 96 inches
  - Space between plants: 36 to 96 inches

### Soil and Fertility

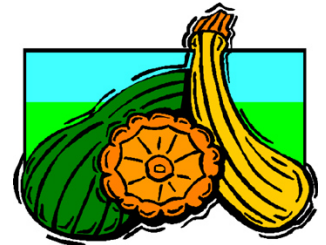
- Well drained soils are best
- Organic soils tend to produce low sugar, soft fruit
- Irrigate on sandy soils
- Follow soil test recommendations
- Squash can grow in pH from 5.5 to 7.5  
Under optimum soil test levels apply...
  - 3.0 oz of nitrogen per 100 sq ft
  - 1.9 oz of phosphate per 100 sq ft
  - 4.1 oz of potassium per 100 sq ft

### Soil and Fertility continued...

Vine crops need adequate nitrogen in particular. Nitrogen deficiency will limit growth, reduce fruiting, and impair color development. Consider using a broadcast application at planting, a second application banded near 3-leaf plants and a final broadcast application before canopy closure.

### Selecting Squash Varieties

Squash may be vining or bush-like. Individual species are characterized by fruit size, shape, flavor, color, and by the shape of the fruit stem. Small squash of the *Cucurbita pepo* sp. include acorn, delicata, pie pumpkins, small gourds, spaghetti squash, summer squash, and zucchini. *Cucurbita maxima* sp. include banana, buttercup, Hubbard, kabocha, turban, and very large gourds and pumpkins.



*Cucurbita moschata* sp. is the butternut squash. Squash termed summer squash have thin skin and mature midseason while winter squash mature late in the season, have a thick rind and store well.

### Handling Your Squash

Handle summer squash gently to prevent bruising. Wipe squash clean with a damp towel but a water bath is not needed. Summer squash will keep well at 40°-45°F at 95% humidity for about 1 week.

Harvest winter squash when the outer skin is firm enough to resist fingernail pressure. Some frost can be tolerated. Winter squash can simply be wiped clean. Washing can open up skin to diseases. Store at 40°-45°F for up to 3 months.