

**September 18th, 2008**

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man. (George Bernard Shaw)

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## NEW FEATURE

### Squashes

**The Definition of Squash: The fruits of various members of the gourd family, which fall into two classifications, summer squash and winter squash.**

The term "**summer**" and "**winter**" for squash are only based on current usage, not on actuality. "Summer" types are on the market all winter; and "winter" types are on the markets in the late summer and fall, as well as winter. Thus, the terms "summer" and "winter" are deceptive and confusing. This terminology was never meant to confuse— it just dates back to a time when the seasons were more crucial to man's survival than they are now. "Good keepers" became known as winter vegetables if they would "keep" until December.

Winter squash comes in shapes round and elongated, scalloped and pear-shaped with flesh that ranges from golden-yellow to brilliant orange. Most winter squashes are vine-type plants whose fruits are harvested when fully mature. **They take longer to mature than summer squash (3 months or more) and are best harvested once the cool weather of fall sets in.** They can be stored for months in a cool basement—hence the name "winter" squash. Stay away from pumpkin pumpkins, whether they are the classic field type or the original French variety. Carve them, but do not eat them: they are tough and bland.

Winter squash have hard, thick skins. Store in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place for up to one month. Winter squash can be cut in halves or pieces. To cook them, first remove fibers and seeds; then bake, steam, or boil the squash. When water is used in cooking, the quantity of water should be kept small to avoid losing flavor and nutrients. Acorn and butternut squash are frequently cut in half, baked, and served in the shell. Squash pulp is also used for pies and may be prepared in casseroles, soufflés, pancakes, and custards.

### **Equivalents:**

1/3 to 1/2 pound raw unpeeled squash = 1 serving

1 pound peeled squash = 1 cup cooked, mashed

2-1/2 pounds whole squash = 2-3/4 to 3 cups pureed

1 pound trimmed squash = 2 cups cooked pieces

1 pound squash = 2 to 3 servings

12 ounces frozen squash = 1-1/2 cups

One medium-size (15 to 20 pounds) pumpkin = 5 to 7 quarts of cooked pumpkin.

## To Store:

Place winter squash on top of thick pads of newspapers in a cool, dry, well-ventilated location. Check on a regular basis for rot and use within three to six months.

Refrigerate tightly wrapped cut pieces of winter squash, such as banana, and use within five days.

## To Prepare and Use Squash:

All varieties are great for puréeing, roasting and baking. Once squash is cooked and mashed, it can be used in soups, main dishes, vegetable side dishes, even breads, muffins, custards and pies.

### Summer Squash:

Thoroughly scrub each squash under running water until the skin feels clean. Then cut off and discard the stem end and scrape off the other end. Only if the skin is unusually tough or the surface feels especially gritty after washing, is it necessary to peel the squash. Most summer squash is now ready to be used in any recipe.

Depending on your recipe, you may grate, slice, or cut into pieces of various shapes.

**To steam summer squash:** Arrange the slices/pieces of squash in a strainer or rack over 1/2-inch of boiling water. Cover and steam just until barely tender. Remove from heat and drain well. Toss with melted butter or your favorite sauce.

**To sauté:** Cook in butter over medium-high heat until barely tender. Season with herbs of your choice, salt, and pepper.

### Winter Squash:

Winter squash matures on the vine and develops an inedible, thick, hard rind and tough seeds. Because this rind makes most squash difficult to peel, it is easier to cook the unpeeled squash, and then scoop out the cooked flesh. Wash the exterior of the squash just before using. The seeds are scooped out before or after cooking.

To cut in half, grasp the squash firmly and use a sharp knife to slice through to the center. Then flip and cut the other side until the squash falls open. Remove and discard the seeds.

Dress any cooked winter squash with butter and herbs, a cream sauce, cheese sauce, maple syrup and nuts, marinara sauce or stewed fruit.

**To bake:** Using a whole (1 to 1 1/2 pound) winter squash, pierce the rind with a fork and bake in a 350-degree oven 45 minutes. Test for doneness by piercing with a fork.

**Boil or steam:** Cut into quarters or rings 25 minutes or until tender. Boil or mash winter squash just as you would potatoes. Or add peeled squash cubes to your favorite soups, stews, beans, gratins and vegetable ragouts.

**To microwave:** Place halves or quarters, cut side down, in a shallow dish; add 1/4 cup water. Cover tightly and microwave on HIGH 6 minutes per pound.

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## Freezing Squash:

*(Cocozelle, Crookneck, Pattypan, Straightneck, White Scallop, Zucchini)*

## Summer Squash:

Choose young squash with tender skin.

Wash and cut in 1/2-inch slices. Water blanch 3 minutes. Cool promptly, drain and package, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

**Grated Zucchini (for Baking)** – Choose young tender zucchini. Wash and grate. Steam blanch in small quantities 1 to 2 minutes until translucent. Pack in measured amounts into containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Cool by placing the containers in cold water. Seal and freeze.

If watery when thawed, discard the liquid before using the zucchini.

## Winter Squash:

Choose firm, well-shaped squash that are heavy for their size and have a hard, tough skin. Do not choose those that have sunken or moldy spots. Avoid squash with cuts or punctures in the skin. Also, slight variations in skin color do not affect flavor. A tender rind indicates immaturity, which is a sign of poor quality in winter squash varieties.

Wash and cut squash into small pieces, remove seeds and peel. Cook until soft. Mash pulp or put through sieve.

Cool by placing pan containing squash over crushed ice and stir until cool. Place in an appropriate freeze bag, or container, with 1/2" headspace; freeze.

Varieties include: Acorn, Ambercup, Autumn cup, Banana, Butternut, Buttercup, Carnival, Delicata, Fairytale, Goldnugget, Hubbard, Kobocho, Spaghetti, Sweet Dumpling, and Turban Squash <sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> <http://whatscookingamerica.net/squash.htm>; September 18, 2008.



## Recipe

### Acorn Squash With Apple Raisin Stuffing

This delicious baked acorn squash is stuffed with a combination of chopped apples, cinnamon, and raisins or dried cranberries, along with melted butter. It is an easy side dish to make, and goes well with chops, steaks, pork roasts, poultry, and sausages.

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- Boiling water
- 2 acorn squash
- 2 large cooking apples, peeled, cored, chopped
- 2 to 4 tablespoons raisins or coarsely chopped dried cranberries
- 3 to 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 4 tablespoons brown sugar

#### **PREPARATION:**

Heat oven to 375°.

In a large baking dish or jelly roll pan, pour in about 1/4-inch of boiling water. Cut squash in half lengthwise; with a spoon, remove all pulp and seeds. Place each half cut-side down in the baking dish. Bake for 30 minutes.

Combine remaining ingredients. Remove squash from the oven; turn halves over. Stuff the center of each squash half with the apple mixture. Return to the oven for 30 to 35 minutes longer, or until apples and squash are tender. Stir each center lightly before serving.  
Serves four.

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