



# Winter Squash!

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Squash has been used as a nutritious food for thousands of years in North America. You might find buttercup, butternut, acorn and/or spaghetti squash in your local grocery store. Botanists consider squash to be a fruit, but it is used as a vegetable on menus.

## Growing

In the Midwest, plant squash in late May to early June when the soil temperature reaches approximately 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Plant squash seeds  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch deep, 24 to 36 inches apart. Use the closer spacing if the variety is a bush type. Spacing between rows should be 5 to 6 feet. Squash need at least 1 inch of rainwater or irrigation each week to grow the best.

## Storage

Squash keep best in a cool place at 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit with 50-70% relative humidity. Keep the squash on a shelf instead of a concrete floor and keep the surface of the squash dry. Properly stored, squash varieties have a relatively long shelf life, as shown by these examples:

Acorn .....	one to two months
Buttercup (turban type)....	three to six months
Butternut .....	two to three months
Hubbard .....	three to six months

## Preservation

Squash may be frozen, pressure canned (in chunk form) or dried.

**Freezing:** Select full-colored mature squash with fine texture. Wash and cut into cooking-size sections and remove seeds. Cook until soft in boiling water, steam, a pressure cooker or an oven. When soft, remove pulp. Cool, then pack the pulp into freezer-safe containers or bags, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch head space. Label with the contents and date.

**Canning:** Squash can be canned in a pressure canner, but for safety reasons, you should not can mashed squash.

*To pressure can squash chunks, follow the procedure for pumpkin listed in the NDSU Extension publication "Home Canning Low-acid Vegetables".*

**Drying:** Wash rind. Cut the squash into pieces. Remove seeds and pulp. Cut the squash into 1-inch-wide strips. Peel rind. Cut strips crosswise into pieces about  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick. Blanch one minute. Dry for 10 to 16 hours in a dehydrator until tough to brittle.

## Nutrition

Squash is a nutrient-rich food and an excellent source of fiber. One-half cup of cooked, mashed squash without added salt has 42 calories, 0 grams (g) fat, 1 g protein, 11 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 4 milligrams sodium. Squash is high in beta-carotene, which our bodies use to make vitamin A, and the mineral potassium.



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# Recipes

## Key to abbreviations

c. = cup	oz. = ounce
tsp. = teaspoon	g = gram
Tbsp. = tablespoon	mg = milligram

## Creamy Squash Soup

- ¼ c. butter
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 6 c. butternut squash, peeled and cubed
- 3 c. chicken broth (plus extra to adjust consistency if needed)
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ¾ tsp. dried rubbed sage (or to taste)
- 16 oz. light cream cheese

In a large saucepan, sauté onions in butter until tender. Add squash, chicken broth, cayenne and black pepper, and sage. Bring to a boil and cook 20 minutes or until squash is tender. Puree the squash mixture and cream cheese in a blender or food processor in batches until smooth. Return to saucepan and heat through. Do not allow to boil. If the soup needs thinning, add additional chicken broth until desired consistency is reached.

This recipe was analyzed with reduced-sodium chicken broth.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 250 calories, 14 g fat, 9 g protein, 21 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber and 360 mg sodium.



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## Parmesan Roasted Acorn Squash

- 1 (2-pound) acorn squash
- ¼ c. grated Parmesan cheese
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme (or ¾ tsp. ground dried thyme)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil (or other oil)
- ½ tsp. salt, or to taste
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper, or to taste

Preheat oven to 400 F. Wash squash, then halve lengthwise, seed and cut into ¾-inch slices. Mix Parmesan cheese, thyme, oil, salt and pepper together in a bowl. Add squash and toss until the squash is evenly coated. Spread into a jelly roll pan or other pan with sides. Roast until golden brown and tender, 25 to 30 minutes.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 90 calories, 4.5 g fat, 2 g protein, 12 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 170 mg sodium.

## Spaghetti Squash Tacos

- 1 large spaghetti squash, halved and seeded
- 2 tsp. canola oil (or oil of choice)
- ⅓ c. onion, diced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced
- ½ (1.25-oz.) package dry taco seasoning mix
- 1 pinch salt, to taste
- 12 crisp taco shells

Preheat oven to 375 F. Place the two halves of the squash with the cut side facing down into a baking dish. Bake until tender, 30 to 40 minutes. Strip the squash from the rind with a fork into short strands and set aside. Heat the vegetable oil in a skillet over medium heat; cook the onion and jalapeño pepper in the hot oil until the onion is browned and soft, seven to 10 minutes. Add the squash and taco seasoning; cook and stir the mixture for five minutes more. Season with salt. Stuff into taco shells to serve.

Makes 12 servings. Each serving has 90 calories, 4 g fat, 1 g protein, 14 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 420 mg sodium.

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