

BUTTERNUT SQUASH

SEASON: August through December

NUTRITION FACTS: Butternut squash has calcium, iron and is a good source of potassium. Natural antioxidants in fruits and vegetables will help keep your body working at its best. Fruits and vegetables are protective to health as they're helpful at reducing the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke and some cancers. They're also low in calories, which helps prevent obesity (a significant risk factor for type 2 diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease).

SELECTION: Begin by selecting a squash that has a smooth, even tan colored skin free of blemishes, cracks or soft spots. The stem should be brownish and woody looking. Look for the ones with the longest, fattest necks as this is the "meaty" part of the squash; the seeds are found in the bulbous lower part. Butternut squash come in various sizes weighing between 1 ½ to 5 pounds. One pound of squash becomes roughly 2 cups of cooked squash or 2 cups cubed.

STORAGE:

Butternut squash keeps well for four months in a cool dry, well ventilated location. Even greater success is assured when the squash has been "cured" post-harvest. This involves approximately 10 days of air drying in warm temperatures (80-85F). If you have more squash than can be used at one time, it will keep up to four days in the refrigerator (cooked or fresh) or can be frozen for later use as a puree or cubed.

To freeze cubed squash, blanch peeled cubes of raw squash for 3 minutes—drain, and chill in cold water. Keep blanched cubes in a colander while chilling to avoid their breaking apart. Drain thoroughly and spread on a cookie sheet in a single layer; place in the freezer for at least 4 hours and then transfer to an air-tight freezer bag. Frozen cubes can be added directly to your recipe.



Seasonal Eating
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Butternut Squash

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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development.
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating.

Butternut Squash Fritters

INGREDIENTS

5 cups butternut squash, shredded
2 eggs
1 Tablespoon fresh sage, minced
2/3 cups all purpose flour
2 Tablespoon olive oil, extra-virgin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

PREPARATION

- In a large bowl, combine butternut squash, eggs, sage, salt & pepper. Fold in flour and add more if needed.
- Add olive oil to skillet over medium heat.
- Drop 1/4 cup of the mixture at a time.
- Cook about 2 minutes on each side or until they are cooked through and golden brown.

Slow Cooker Butternut Squash Soup

INGREDIENTS

6 cups butternut squash—peeled, seeded, and cubed
4 cloves of garlic, minced
1/2 white onion, finely chopped
1 (32 fluid ounces) container vegetable stock
1/2 cup parmesan cheese, shaved
Salt and black pepper to taste

PREPARATION

- Combine butternut squash, onion, garlic, and vegetable stock in the slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours or on low for 4 hours until squash is very tender.
- Transfer to a blender or use an immersion blender to blend until smooth.
- Stir in parmesan cheese, cover for another 5-10 minutes until cheese is melted. Season with salt and pepper.

Simple Roasted Butternut Squash

INGREDIENTS

1 butternut squash—peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch cubes
2 Tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt & ground black pepper to taste

PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
- Toss butternut squash with olive oil and garlic in a large bowl. Season with salt and black pepper.
- Arrange coated squash on a baking sheet.
- Roast in a preheated oven until squash is tender and lightly browned, 25 to 30 minutes.

Butternut Squash Soup

INGREDIENTS

2 Tablespoons butter
1 medium butternut squash—peeled, seeded, and cubed
1 small onion, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 medium carrot, chopped
1 (32 fluid ounces) container chicken stock
1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
Salt and black pepper to taste

PREPARATION

- Melt the butter in a large pot. Add squash, onion, celery, & carrot. Cook 10 minutes or until lightly browned.
- Pour in enough of the chicken stock to cover the vegetables. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover pot, and simmer 40 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
- Transfer the soup to a blender, and blend until smooth. Return to pot, and mix in any remaining stock to attain desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper.