

Winter Squash from Field to Fork

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a squash primer

Class taught by Abbey Palmer and Sarah Monte

For the first time ever, we are offering a class that includes both gardening and cooking instructions. We love squash, and since it stores well, have come up with many ways to use it, ensuring we can eat local food that is also delicious all year round. So before we get to the recipes, here's a little information about winter squash - what's available to purchase, and how to grow it yourself, so you have a lot of squash to use in these recipes next year.

Delicata Squash

Flesh is sweet, nutty, and a bit drier than other squash, with a distinct corn-like flavor. The skin of the delicata is edible.



Carnival Squash

Flavorful yellow flesh that is buttery and sweet once cooked. Excellent in soups.

Acorn Squash

The yellow to orange flesh of this squash is known for being especially tender, moist, and sweet. Wonderful cut in half and baked.



notes

writers' workshop squash bread

(Makes two 9X5X3 loaf pans, 1 ½ sheet cake, or muffins) Abbey Palmer

I started making this bread when I was in graduate school. It became the favorite of Pulitzer prize winners, or so they said, probably to get me to stop forcing another slice on them at literary soirees where I was very young, and awkwardly playing my grandmother because I couldn't imagine being myself. I don't know where I got the time to do it, but I made this bread almost every week. The ritual of measuring, mixing, baking, and slicing was therapeutic. Don't worry, I'm still working on my novel.

wet

- ¾ C butter, room temperature
- 2 C brown sugar
- 4 eggs, room temperature
- 2 C cooked squash (pumpkin, acorn, and many others work well)
- ¾ C milk or water (and a little more, if necessary)

dry

- 3 ½ C flour
- 2 t baking soda
- ½ t baking powder
- 1 ½ t salt
- 1 t cinnamon
- 1 t cloves

stir-ins

- ½ C candied ginger, chopped or sliced
- ½ C pumpkin seeds
- ½ C chocolate chips

topping

- 2 T turbinado sugar
- 2 T pumpkin seeds

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease and flour pans.

Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, incorporating completely before adding the next. Add squash and beat mixture to a uniform consistency.

Begin blending in dry ingredients, alternating with milk, ending with dry ingredients. Stir in ginger, seeds, or chocolate chips.

Pour or spoon into prepared pans. To make topping, sprinkle sugar and pumpkin seeds over top of cake and allow to sit for 10 minutes. Bake 60 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cooking times vary for muffins or sheet cake.

Buttercup Squash

A variety of Turban squash with orange flesh and a flavor reminiscent of a sweet potato.



Butternut Squash

The sweetest of the winter squash with a full, hearty flavor. The smooth, bright orange flesh purees easily.

Pie Pumpkin

This full-flavored squash is perfect not only for pies, but also for soups, breads, and curries.



Spaghetti Squash

When cooked, the flesh falls away from the skin in noodle-like strands. Seeds can be roasted and enjoyed like pumpkin seeds.

Hubbard Squash

Tender and golden yellow flesh. The thick skin of this squash makes it one of the best storing of the winter squash varieties.



growing your own

planting

Sow seeds outdoors in 12" diameter hills after danger of frost has passed and soil has warmed. Hills should be spaced 6' apart in all directions. Plant seeds 1" deep with 6-8 seeds per hill; thin to 3-4 plants per hill. Can also be started indoors 3 weeks before transplanting outdoors. Squash prefers full sun.

Many have difficulty successfully transplanting squash, as their root system is very delicate. For maximum success, direct seed varieties that mature within our growing season or grow using season extension techniques.

seed saving

Knowing the species of a squash is important to saving pure seed. Check out the chart below to see which varieties belong to which species. Squash WITHIN the same species will cross-pollinate. Isolation of ¼ mile is recommended. However, squash will not cross-pollinate BETWEEN species, and thus you can save pure seed from an acorn, a butternut, and a kabocha all grown in the same garden.

Seeds should be taken from fruit that has gone past maturity 3 weeks. Remove seeds, wash, and allow to dry. One technique is to fill a bowl containing the seeds with water. Discard the floaters, and keep the largest of the sinkers. Store in a baby food jar with desiccant or in an envelope in the freezer. Choose the largest, plumpest seeds to save. Squash seeds store for about 6 years and remain viable.

Curcubita pepo

Fruits usually turn color when ripe.
5-sided ribbed stems and ribbed fruits.

- All summer squash
- Acorn
- Delicata
- Pie pumpkins

Curcubita moschata

Fruits are smooth and tan

- Butternut
- Cheese pumpkins

As soon as the squash is softened, add enough egg to start to cover the squash. Add sausage, a little more egg. Add kale, cover with the rest of the egg. Cook for a couple of minutes on the stove.

Transfer skillet to the oven. After a half an hour, check on frittata. When frittata is mostly set but not completely cooked, add cheese. Cook until cheese is lightly browned. Let cool for a minute before cutting.

squash frittata

(serves 6-8 depending on how hungry you are) Sarah Monte

I live with a farmer, and I quickly found there is no better way to his heart than to make good food with products he's grown. This is a meal made early in our relationship, when the pressure was on to impress using a box of produce he brought me. it worked, and hopefully it will for you too.

- 1 T olive oil
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- ½ bunch of kale
- 8 oz breakfast sausage
- 1 medium- large delicata or sweet dumpling squash
(a squash with edible skin)
- 8 eggs
- ½ - 1 C milk
- salt and pepper to taste
- ½ - 1 C grated cheese (gruyere or cheddar work well)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Cut squash in half, remove seeds. Place squash cut side down. Cut squash into very thin slices. Set aside.

Rip or cut leaves off of kale. Chop stems into small pieces, set aside. Chop leaves into pieces, set aside. In a skillet, heat olive oil and add garlic. Stir garlic once, add kale stems. Once stems are softened, add kale leaves. Cook until soft.

In a medium cast iron skillet, cook the sausage. When cooked, drain grease and set sausage aside.

Whisk the eggs and milk with a little salt and pepper in a bowl. Set aside.

Add grease back to the pan. If there is not a lot of grease (or you just want the flavor) you can add some butter. The pan should be very well greased. When the pan is hot, add the squash. The heat should high enough to sear the squash to a nice golden brown, but not burning. Cook squash until just starting to get soft and browned. Lower heat if there is burning.

Curcubita maxima

When the stem is fully dried, fruit is ripe.

Buttercups
Hubbard
Turban
Kabocha
Jack O'Lantern pumpkins

storage

<http://www.fedcoseeds.com/seeds/articles/squash.htm>

It is critical to keep the stems on the fruits. I therefore recommend using pruning snips, rather than tugging or twisting them off the vine. Any fruits that lose their stems must be eaten very soon for they will not keep long.

All squash should be sun-cured. Leave them in the field for 10-14 sunny days, covering if rain or frost threatens, then uncovering promptly when the threat abates. They will continue to after-ripen, developing their full sugars and delectable flavor. When nights become consistently cold, bring them indoors for keeps.

Once they are finally brought in, keep them above 50° F. Any place 50-70° with 60-70% relative humidity is ideal. But the root cellar is a no-no; it is too cold and damp and they will rapidly deteriorate.

Squash in storage are antisocial. Place them where they are not touching one another and where the air circulation is good. If you must heap them in a pile, mold can spread rapidly, so check frequently for mold spots and cull all those with such spots, and any others with soft spots or bruises.

Squashes vary widely in their storability. Some, such as the French Galeuse D'Eysines and the Winter Luxury pumpkin (notwithstanding its name) will be lucky to make it intact until Thanksgiving. Others, such as Australian heirlooms Queensland Blue and Triamble, cheese pumpkins and Long Pie, and some of the Japanese Kabochas will keep seemingly forever. The latter, often indifferent eating in fall, don't develop full flavors until late winter, when they are said by their devotees to be superb.

squash & black bean tacos

(serves 4) Sarah Monte

In our house, we are always trying to use food that we've grown and eat seasonally, but love to eat diverse food. This has led to using fall produce for recipes that normally use high summer foods. We do many variations on this recipe; squash and cheese quesadillas, squash and cooked kale on nachos, or squash as part of a stir fry.

This is a great way to use up leftover roasted squash. You can also adapt the squash portion of the recipe to use as a side. When you add spices and stock, simply stop at a consistency similar to how you like your mashed potatoes.

The cabbage slaw is easily made the day before or the morning before you make the rest of the meal, this will allow the flavors to blend together and the cabbage to soften.

squash

- roasted squash, any kind
- 1 t cumin
- ½ t thyme
- ½ t cayenne (or to taste)
- ½ ground pepper
- ¼ t salt
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- chicken or vegetable stock

cabbage slaw

- 2lbs green cabbage, very thinly shredded
- ½ t red pepper flakes, or more to taste
- 1 clove minced garlic

If you don't have leftover roasted squash, begin by slicing a squash in half, scooping out seeds, and coating with olive oil. In a baking dish, put a little more olive oil. Roast at 400°F until soft. You can add more olive oil if you want, or use water. I find it develops a richer flavor and caramelizes a little when I use oil instead of water.

- salt to taste
- ¼ C fresh squeezed lime juice
- ¼ C neutral oil
- ¼- ½ bunch cilantro, chopped
- ¼ C green onions, sliced

other

- feta or a shredded, salty, Mexican cheese
- corn tortillas
- 1 can of black beans
- 2-3 cloves of garlic
- oil

Sauté shallot in olive oil. Once the shallots soften and start to take on color, add salted garlic and stir until fragrant. Do not burn the garlic. Add wine and deglaze the pan. The type of wine has a lot to do with the final flavor of the sauce in this simple dish, so experiment and enjoy.

Add tomatoes and simmer over medium heat until the tomatoes break down into smaller pieces and the liquid is thick enough to coat a spoon.

Tear basil leaves over the sauce and stir in to incorporate. Cut the heat.

To plate, start with a portion of squash, a dollop of sauce, and then freshly ground black pepper and a generous amount of parmesan. This dish reheats well, so after dinner portion the leftovers in a few small containers and grab one out of the fridge for lunch during the week!

spaghetti squash spaghetti

(serves 4) Abbey Palmer

The unpretentious spaghetti squash makes a wonderful lunch with fresh tomato sauce, which captures the last of summer flavors. It's my favorite way to use tomatoes pulled from the garden before the frost that spend a few weeks ripening on the windowsill. Pack a small jar of pickled vegetables and a few slices of crusty bread to go alongside this. The yield really depends on the size of the squash. A two pound spaghetti squash makes about 4 portions, which is the size used in the following recipe.

This sauce can be a quick affair, or a labor of love—it all depends on what you think of tomato skins in your tomato sauce. To blanch and peel, or not? If it's Saturday and I'm making a perfect dinner to impress my dearest friends, I do it. Otherwise, I don't. It's good either way.

- 2lb spaghetti squash
- 4 T olive oil
- 2 lbs or about 5 ripe tomatoes, blanch, peeled, and quartered
- 1 C shallots or red onion, thinly sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced and salted
- ½ C wine, white, red, or whatever is open (I like a bright, citrusy Vino Verde, but cooking sherry does well here, too)
- 10 fresh basil leaves
- salt to taste
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1 C Parmesan cheese, grated with a microplane or shaved, or your most loved method

Halve the squash, scrape out seeds, and bake cut-side down in a baking dish with 1 inch of water until soft, about 40 minutes. I have used a 9X13 glass pan to great success with large squash, and pie tins for tiny ones. Allow the squash to cool, then scrape into a bowl and keep warm.

Drop tomatoes in boiling water for 15-30 seconds, depending on the size of the tomato. Remove with a slotted spoon to a bowl and run cold water into the bowl in the sink. Pull skins off and use running water to aid the process. Once peeled, quarter and set aside.

For the cabbage slaw, place shredded cabbage in a large bowl.

In a small jar, place red pepper flakes, garlic, lime juice and oil. Screw on lid and shake vigorously. Pour at least half over the cabbage. Mix the dressing with your hands (wear gloves if you wish), really squeezing the cabbage until it softens. This step is especially helpful if you are not making the slaw ahead. Add the cilantro and green onions and stir briefly just to mix, add the rest of the dressing, and set aside.

When the squash is roasted, scoop into a bowl and set aside. In a medium pot, heat a tablespoon of butter or oil. Add garlic. As soon as it is golden, remove from heat and add cumin, thyme, cayenne, pepper, and salt. Stir and immediately add the squash with a little stock. Return to heat.

Stir, mashing the squash and adding stock as needed to create smooth, but not watery, squash puree. It should be at least the consistency of hummus, if not a little thicker. Set aside.

Drain and rinse canned black beans. Heat a pan with a little neutral oil. Add garlic, cook until just starting to turn golden and add black beans. Stir, mashing a little if you want. Done when warmed through.

These are really good on a fried tortilla. Coat a pan with a neutral, high heat oil, such as safflower or sunflower. Heat until oil shimmers then add a tortilla, flipping when one side is lightly browned. When hot with brown spots, place on paper towel.

Spread squash mixture on warm tortilla. Then place a dollop of black beans, a large spoonful of cabbage slaw, and a sprinkling of feta cheese. Good with a little hot sauce too.

squash tart

Makes 1 tart

We used buttercup squash for this, but a butternut or other quite sweet squash would also work. We found the chili pepper and honey recipe online, but got excited about how versatile this tart could be. Use one of our toppings or go ahead and invent your own.

tart

- 1 buttercup squash, halved, seeded, peeled and cut into 1/8" slices
- 1 package frozen puff pastry, generally 15 oz., thawed overnight in the fridge
- 1 egg
- 2 t cream, milk, or butter
- 1 T olive oil
- salt

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Gently unfold puff pastry dough and transfer to the baking sheet. Brush with 1 large egg beaten with 2 t. cream.

Arrange 1/8" thick slices of squash over pastry, overlapping as needed and leaving a 1/2" border. *(If you are making the pumpkin pie galette, you would be using your spiced squash mixture)*

Place another sheet of parchment paper over the squash. Set another rimmed baking sheet over the tart. This will weigh down the pastry dough and steam the squash slices.

Bake until the bottom of the pastry begins to brown and the top begins to puff, 10-18 minutes. Remove the top baking sheet and discard the top layer of parchment paper. *(If you are making the sage tart, drizzle half of your sage mixture over the tart.)*

Return tart, uncovered, to oven and bake until pastry is a deep golden brown and cooked through, about 25-30 minutes longer.

When golden brown and puffed remove from oven.

sage & chevre

- 4 T butter
- 10 leaves sage
- 5 T chevre

Heat butter to almost smoking over medium-high heat. Add sage leaves, stir until fried crisp, and remove pan from heat. After the tart as been baked for about 10 minutes, drizzle half of the sage butter over it. When it is finished, drizzle the rest, then place dollops of the chevre around the tart. If you want, you can place back in the oven to melt the chevre a little.

chili pepper honey adapted from Bon Appétit, October 2012

- ¼ C honey
- 1 cayenne, fresno, or red Thai chili, thinly sliced
- 2 T water
- Shaved parmesan cheese

Combine ingredients in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Boil until thickened slightly and syrupy, about six minutes. Top the tart with parm after it is removed from the oven; drizzle the chilli oil over it.

pumpkin pie

- 4 T butter
- 2 t pumpkin pie spice
- 1 t cinnamon
- 2 T maple syrup

Melt butter over medium heat. Add spices and syrup, stirring briskly to cook spices in butter. Add squash and toss to coat, then remove from heat. Layer the squash on the puff pastry and bake as directed.