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# Let's Enjoy Winter Squash!

**Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D.,**  
Food and Nutrition Specialist

**M**any types of winter squash are available, including acorn, buttercup, butternut, delicata, Hubbard and spaghetti squash. Squash and pumpkin are part of the “Cucurbit” family, and they are “cousins” to zucchini and cucumbers. Even though squash is used as a vegetable on the menu, squash is technically the fruit of the plant.

Winter squash is a nutrient-rich food and an excellent source of fiber. Orange-fleshed squash is high in beta-carotene, which our bodies use to make vitamin A, and it provides the mineral potassium.

Squash can last many months if stored in a cool, dry place. If you purchase cut squash, be sure to refrigerate it. Squash can be prepared by cooking in water, baking or microwaving.

This handout provides tips and recipes for preparing and preserving winter squash. See the section about squash at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork) for more information

## Key to abbreviations

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

## Baked Squash

To prepare squash in a conventional oven, simply rinse the squash thoroughly under cool running water and scrub with a vegetable brush if needed. Poke several holes in the clean squash with a knife and place it in a pan. Bake without covering. You can adjust the temperature and baking time depending on what else you might be baking. A medium squash will take about an hour to bake at 350 F and would pair well with baked potatoes and meatloaf. If you cook the squash at 400 F, it will become tender sooner. When squash is fork-tender, you are ready to peel it, remove the seeds, mash, season and serve.

On average, ½ 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 mg sodium.

## Roasted Winter Squash

1 winter squash, 2½ pounds, peeled	¼ tsp. salt
(delicata, acorn, butternut, etc.)	¼ tsp. pepper
1 Tbsp. honey or pure maple syrup	1½ Tbsp. olive oil or other cooking oil
1 Tbsp. brown sugar	

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease a baking sheet (with sides) with oil. Rinse the squash, then cut into chunks or wedges about 1½ inches thick. Place in a large bowl. Mix remaining ingredients in a separate bowl. Pour the mixture over the squash and mix well. Place cut sides down in an even layer on the baking sheet. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes until tender. Use a sharp knife to test doneness. The squash should be tender but slightly firm so the wedges retain their shape.

Makes six servings. Each serving has 120 calories, 3.5 g fat, 2 g protein, 24 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 105 mg sodium.

## Creamy Squash Soup

¼ c. butter	⅓ tsp. cayenne pepper
1 medium onion, finely chopped	¼ tsp. black pepper
6 c. squash, peeled and cubed	¾ tsp. dried rubbed sage (or to taste)
3 c. low-sodium chicken broth (plus extra to adjust consistency if needed)	16 oz. light cream cheese

In a large saucepan, saute 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 it needs thinning, add additional chicken broth until desired consistency is reached.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 220 calories, 15 g fat, 7 g protein, 17 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 270 mg sodium



## Mexican-style Squash Soup

2 Tbsp. olive oil or your favorite cooking oil  
2 medium onions, chopped  
1 c. carrots, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 winter squash (about 2½ pounds), peeled, seeded and cubed  
2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and chopped (or to taste)  
5 c. low-sodium chicken broth  
1 c. tomato puree  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Lime wedges, for serving

Rinse and prepare vegetables. In a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onions, carrots and garlic and cook for 3 minutes. Cover the pan. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 3 to 4 minutes longer, or until the vegetables are soft. Stir in the squash, jalapeños, chicken broth and tomato puree. Bring to a simmer; cook for 30 minutes. Mash the squash to a chunky puree with a potato masher or the back of a spoon. Season to taste. Serve with lime wedges, to be squeezed into each bowl of soup.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 170 calories, 5 g fat, 6 g protein, 28 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber and 500 mg sodium.

## Roasted Acorn Squash With Nuts and Cranberries

1 medium acorn squash  
1 Tbsp. olive oil  
1 tsp. black pepper  
2 Tbsp. butter  
2 Tbsp. brown sugar  
¼ c. chopped nuts  
(suggested walnuts, pecans or almonds)  
¼ c. dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 400 F. Wash, then cut acorn squash in half and scoop out the seeds from the middle with a spoon. After removing the seeds. Cut each squash half into 4 wedges and place into a baking dish. Brush the wedges with olive oil and top with brown sugar and pepper. Bake for 40 minutes or until squash can be pierced by a fork. In a saucepan, heat butter, nuts and cranberries over medium heat. Spoon mixture over squash wedges.

Makes eight (side dish) servings. Each serving (one wedge) has 120 calories, 8 g fat, 1 g protein, 13 g carbohydrate, 1.5 g fiber and 25 mg sodium.



## Chicken Alfredo Spaghetti Squash

1 medium spaghetti squash (4 pounds)  
2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided  
1 tsp. Italian seasoning  
2 c. water  
8 oz. roasted or grilled chicken breast, cubed  
1 tsp. garlic, minced  
1 c. Alfredo sauce, reduced fat  
½ c. Italian cheese blend



Cut squash in half lengthwise; remove the seeds. Brush each half with ½ Tbsp. olive oil. Sprinkle with Italian seasoning. Place squash in a slow cooker with the cut side up. Add water to the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours or high for 3 to 4 hours until squash is easy to shred. If using canned chicken, drain and rinse to remove excess sodium. Heat 1 Tbsp. olive oil over medium heat in a skillet. Add chicken and garlic. Cook for about 6 minutes or until heated through (165 F). Remove squash from slow cooker and carefully shred with a fork, saving the skins. The strands should start to look like spaghetti. Place in a large bowl. Mix in cooked chicken. Add Alfredo sauce to chicken and squash mixture. Stir until combined. Place the mixture back into the skins on a baking sheet. Top with cheese. Place under broiler for approximately 5 minutes or until cheese is golden brown. Remove mixture from skins or serve as boats.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 420 calories, 20 g fat, 28 g protein, 37 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber and 540 mg sodium.

## Preserving Winter Squash

**FREEZING:** Select full-colored mature winter 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. Push out air and leave ½ inch space between food and top of container. Label with the contents and date.

**CANNING:** Squash chunks 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](#)" (FN173).

**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 ¼ inch thick. Blanch 1 minute in boiling water. Dry for 10 to 16 hours in a dehydrator until tough to brittle.

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