



Eat a Variety of Fruits & Vegetables Every Day

# Fruit & Vegetable of the Month



Winter squash comes in many varieties and sizes. Unlike its summer counterparts, winter squash is harvested at a mature age, which makes the skin hard and inedible. The skin, however, is protective and increases its storage life. Winter squash can be stored for 3 months or longer.

The yellow and orange flesh of the winter squash is more nutritious and richer in vitamins, such as beta carotene, than summer squash. Winter squash is always served cooked and, because of its tough skin, only the inside flesh is eaten.

Acorn Squash		Butternut Squash		Hubbard Squash	
Serving Size: 1/2 cup baked (103g)		Serving Size: 1/2 cup baked (103g)		Serving Size: 1/2 cup baked (103g)	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>		<b>Amount Per Serving</b>		<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
Calories 60		Calories 40		Calories 60	
Calories from Fat 0		Calories from Fat 0		Calories from Fat 5	
	<b>% Daily Value</b>		<b>% Daily Value</b>		<b>% Daily Value</b>
Total Fat 0g	0%	Total Fat 0g	0%	Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	Saturated Fat 0g	0%	Saturated Fat 10g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	Cholesterol 0mg	0%	Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 15mg	1%	Sodium 0mg	0%	Sodium 5mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 15g	5%	Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%	Total Carbohydrate 13g	4%
Dietary Fiber 5g	18%	Dietary Fiber 3g	11%	Dietary Fiber 3g	11%
Sugars -g		Sugars 2g		Sugars -g	
Protein 1g		Protein 1g		Protein 3g	
Vitamin A	8%	Vitamin A	230%	Vitamin A	140%
Vitamin C	20%	Vitamin C	25%	Vitamin C	20%
Calcium	4%	Calcium	4%	Calcium	2%
Iron	6%	Iron	4%	Iron	4%

\*Note serving size differences; a Fruits & Veggies—More Matters serving is 1/2 cup of cooked squash.

Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

## Selection

Winter squash comes in many sizes. Pick a size based on your cooking needs. For a quality squash, choose one that has a smooth, dry rind and is free of cracks or soft spots. Skin that is easily nicked or scraped with a fingernail means that the squash did not reach maturity. Look for rind that has a dull appearance. A shiny rind indicates that it has been picked too early or has a wax coating, which masks the skin and makes it inedible when cooked. Choose squash that has a deep color and is heavy for its size. It is also best to choose squash with a firm, rounded, dry stem. Squash with no stem permits bacteria to enter.

Cut pieces can be found in the grocery market. Choose pieces that have a good interior color and finely-grained flesh that is not fibrous. Ideal flesh should be barely moist, but not too dry or too watery.

## Storage

Winter squash has a long shelf life and can be stored for up to 3 months or longer in a cool, dry place between 55° and 60°F. A higher temperature will shorten storage time, but it will not alter the flavor. Storage temperatures below 50°F (as in a refrigerator) will cause squash to spoil more rapidly. If the squash needs to be refrigerated, it can be stored for 1 to 2 weeks. Cut pieces of squash should be tightly wrapped and refrigerated. Cooked, pureed squash can be frozen for use later as a side dish or to thicken, color, or flavor soups, sauces, or stews.

## Varieties



### Acorn

This acorn-shaped squash is one of the most widely available among the small winter squash. It measures about 6 inches around and weighs 1 to 2 pounds. Baking is an excellent way to bring out the flavors of this squash.



### Banana

This squash comes in three varieties: blue, orange, and pink. Among the three varieties, the pink banana is the most common in the United States. It is grown commercially in Florida. This large, thick-skinned cylindrical squash averages 20 inches long and weighs around 12 pounds. It is so large that it is usually sold in chunks instead of whole. Its creamy textured orange flesh offers a fruity and buttery delight to your palate. Although both baking and steaming are great ways to prepare this tasty squash, steaming produces a slightly sweeter, yet mild flavor.



### Buttercup

This stocky squash is 6 to 8 inches in diameter, averaging 2 to 4 pounds. Its popularity stems from its sweet and creamy orange flesh. Its shortcoming is that it tends to be a bit dry. Baking or steaming can solve this problem; the dry flesh becomes smooth and tastes similar to a mixture of honey, roasted chestnuts, and sweet potato. Even more than baking, steaming softens the flesh and creates a thick puree.



### Butternut

This elongated bell-shaped squash measures about a foot long and weighs an average of 2 to 4 pounds. Its popularity is due to its meaty, yet moderately sweet golden orange flesh. Because of its thin skin, this squash can easily be skinned with a vegetable peeler, which makes it easy to cut and prepare. Baking enhances its sweet, moist, and nutty flavors. Butternut squash is usually available from August through March.



### **Hubbard**

This tear-shaped squash comes in several varieties: green (true), golden, blue, and baby blue. It ranges from dark green to orange and weighs from 5 to 50 pounds. Because of its size, hubbard's popularity has decreased over the years. However, pre-cut portions of green and orange hubbard can be found in markets. Green hubbards are thick, sweet, and dry. Golden hubbards—a smaller squash than the green or blue—are fairly sweet, but have a bitter aftertaste.



### **Spaghetti**

This oval-shaped yellow squash is also called the vegetable spaghetti. It averages 9 inches in length and may weigh 2 to 3 pounds. When cooked, the crisp, tender, spaghetti-like strands yield a mild lightly sweet and fresh taste. Keep in mind that the larger the vegetable, the thicker the strands and the more flavorful the taste.



### **Sweet Dumpling**

This solid round squash, formerly known as the vegetable gourd, is a perfect serving for one person. It is about the size of an apple and weighs up to 1 pound. The skin is a warm cream color striped with ivy green, and it changes to butter color and orange during storage. The skin is relatively tender and can be eaten. The pale-yellow flesh is smooth, fine, and dry as a potato and produces a rich starchy, light to mild sweetness, with a slight corn flavor.

## **Preparation**

### **Baking**

This popular cooking method brings out the sweet flavor of the squash by caramelizing some of the sugars. Cut squash lengthwise in half and remove the seeds and strings. Large squash can also be cut into serving-size pieces if preferred. Place squash, cut-side down in a baking pan lined with foil. Pour 1/4 inch of water in the pan, cover with foil, and bake at 350°F to 400°F. Bake halved squash for 40 to 45 minutes and cut pieces for 15 to 20 minutes or until tender.

### **Boiling**

This technique is a faster method of cooking, but it dilutes the flavor slightly. Peel squash and cut it into pieces. Place pieces in a small amount of boiling water, and cook approximately 5 minutes or until tender. Drain well.

### **Microwaving**

Prepare squash by cutting it in half lengthwise or in large chunks. Place squash cut-side down in a microwavable dish, cover, and cook until tender. Halved pieces usually cook in 7 to 10 minutes and large chunks in 8 minutes.

### **Sautéing**

Using a nonstick pan, sauté grated, peeled, or diced squash in a broth. Sautéing gives the squash, especially if grated, a slightly crunchy texture. Cooking time usually lasts 8 to 10 minutes.

### **Steaming**

Halve squash lengthwise and place cut-side down in a vegetable steamer. Cook over boiling water for 15 to 20 minutes or until the flesh becomes tender. Squash can also be peeled and cut into chunks or slices for steaming.

