Wonderful Winter Squash

Don’t let the name fool you, winter squash is not grown during the winter in Washington. These thick skin vegetables get their name from their long storage life, allowing them to be eaten into the winter.

Winter squash comes in many varieties including acorn, carnival, hubbard, kabocha, spaghetti, butternut and delicata.

Winter squash provides numerous health benefits that may help reduce the risk of many diseases, including heart and respiratory disease, cancer, diabetes and arthritis. Below are some nutrients found in winter squash, and how they may support our bodies:

- Rich in alpha and beta-carotene that gives them their deep yellow and orange colors. These carotenoids turn into vitamin A in our body, which helps our eyesight.
- Good source of vitamin C, which keeps our immune system strong.
- Healthy source of fiber, which helps to regulate digestion and protect against heart disease.

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- Antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds help protect the body from aging and certain diseases such as cancer.
- Polysaccharides that help regulate and/or control blood sugar.¹

**Pick it:** When selecting your squash, find one with a tough rind without soft spots or blemishes. Your squash should feel heavy for its size.

**Store it:** Winter squash should be stored in a cool, dry place. The ideal temperature for storing winter squash is between 50-60°F.

**Cook it:** Winter squash can be cooked in a variety of ways, but make sure to always wash your produce before cooking.

- **Steam it:** Peel squash, remove seeds, and cut into 2-inch cubes. Bring squash to a boil in 1 inch of water and steam for 30 – 40 minutes.
- **Bake it:** No need to peel! Cut squash lengthwise, remove seeds and cook in a baking dish. Bake between 350 to 425 degrees. Larger squash and lower oven temperatures may take longer to cook. Check after about 40 minutes. Squash is done when the shell can be stabbed with a fork and the inside is soft, or in the case of spaghetti squash, separates into strands.
- **Microwave it:** Cut squash lengthwise, remove seeds, put in a microwave-safe baking dish cut side down with 1 to 2 tablespoons water. Cook on HIGH for about 12 minutes for a medium-sized squash. How long it takes to cook depends on the size of squash and power of the microwave. Squash is done when the shell can be stabbed with a fork and the inside is soft, or in the case of spaghetti squash, separates into strands.²

**USDA's MyPlate turns 10 years old!**

A healthy eating routine is important at every stage of life and can have positive effects that add up over time. Launched in 2011, the MyPlate nutrition guidance symbol helps consumers make healthy food choices by translating the Dietary Guidelines for Americans into language we all can understand.

MyPlate provides the following recommendations to help you create a healthy eating routine:

- Focus on whole fruits.
- Vary your veggies.
- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Vary your protein routine.
- Move to low-fat or fat-free dairy milk or yogurt.
- Choose food and beverages with less added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.³

To learn what the right amounts are for you, create a personalized MyPlate Plan based on your age, gender, height, weight, and physical activity level at: [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov).

While on the Myplate site, click on the MyPlate Kitchen link where you can find a thousand healthy, budget-friendly recipes available in English and Spanish to help you follow the Myplate recommendations. 🍃

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² “Spaghetti Squash.” Food Hero, Oregon State University, [foodhero.org/recipes/spaghetti-squash](http://foodhero.org/recipes/spaghetti-squash).

**Stay Active**

These exercises are designed to help you build strength, improve balance, and increase flexibility. In addition to at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, include these exercises in your daily program.

Begin your exercise session by taking five deep breaths – in through your nose and out through your mouth. It is important to keep breathing deeply throughout the exercise session.

**Stand Up and Sit Down**

- Start in a seated position with arms crossed
- Stand up, trying not to use arms
- Sit down, trying not to use arms
- Repeat 10 times.

**Leg Lifts**

- Sit in a chair
- Straighten right leg
- Lift leg as high as is comfortable
- Lower leg, keeping it extended and elevated
- Repeat eight times
- Repeat with left leg
  
  * For additional challenge, use 1-pound ankle weights

*Content from USDA’s Eat Smart, Live Strong Activity Kit*
SNAP Produce Match

SNAP Produce Match is helping stretch your food budget to buy more fruits and vegetables at 200 participating grocery stores across the state. When shoppers use their SNAP/EBT or P-EBT benefits to purchase $10 or more of fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added salt, fat, or sugar, they will get a $5 coupon to spend on their next visit on more fruits and vegetables.

Coupons can be redeemed at stores in the same chain (e.g., Safeway) that they were earned but are not transferable between different chains. Coupons expire one month from the date the coupon is printed. There is no limit on the number of coupons you can redeem in one transaction.

Visit doh.wa.gov/SNAPProduceMatch to learn more and find a participating grocery store near you.

How It Works

• Look for the SNAP Produce Match logo at your local grocery store.
• Buy at least $10 of qualifying fruits and vegetables with your EBT card.
• Save the $5 coupon that prints on the bottom of your receipt.
• Use the coupon to buy fruits and vegetables during your next shopping trip!

Spaghetti Squash Burrito Bowl

Ingredients:
• 2 medium spaghetti squash (about 2 pounds each)
• 2 tbsp. vegetable oil (olive or canola)
• 1 can (15.5 oz.) low sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
• 1 can (15.25 oz.) whole kernel corn, no salt added
• 1 ½ cups fresh bell peppers, chopped
• 1 ½ cups onions, chopped
• ½ cup salsa
• 1 tsp. cumin
• ½ cup shredded cheese

Directions:
1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Cut stem off each spaghetti squash, then slice squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and dark orange stringy pulp with a spoon.
3. Brush with oil, and place cut side down on a baking sheet lined with foil. Bake for about 45 minutes, or until flesh is easy to pierce with a fork.
4. Use a fork to scrape the inner fleshy part of each squash half, creating your “noodles”. Spoon ¼ of the beans, corn, peppers, onions, and salsa into each squash half. Sprinkle cumin on each, then toss to combine.
5. Top each half with shredded cheese, then stick (cut side up) back in the oven on the baking sheet for about 10 minutes or until cheese is melted and mixture is heated throughout.

Recipe adapted from Household Programs USDA Foods Product Information Sheets: Winter Squash, Spaghetti

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Recipe of the Season

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