



Nutrition Notes: January 2016: Harvest of the Month- Winter Squash!

Winter Squash

Cafeteria | VermontHarvestoftheMonth.org



Selection

To select a fully-ripe squash at the peak of its flavor, look for firm, dull-colored skin. A fully-ripe squash will be heavy for its size. If the squash is too young, the skin will be shiny and the flesh less flavorful; if it is too old, the skin will be crinkled and the flesh fibrous.

Storage Tips

Winter storage:

- Remove all dirt and leave on a portion of the stem
- Store out of the sunlight, between 50-60 °F, with good ventilation.
- Depending on the variety, winter squash can be stored between 1-6 months.
- Refrigerate winter squash only if it has been cut or cooked.
- To freeze: Cook and purée, then place in a labeled and dated freezer-grade bag.

Benefits

- Winter squash is an excellent source of vitamin A, the mineral potassium and carotene pigments; it is a good source of vitamin B1 (thiamine), B5 (pantothenic acid), B9 (folic acid) and C, as well as dietary fiber and the mineral copper.

Sources: *The Visual Food Encyclopedia, The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods, GMFTS.*

Kid-Friendly Eating Tips

- Make it savory: cube, add olive oil, your favorite dried herb, salt and pepper; then roast; add to a salad, taco, rice dish, omelet or mac and cheese.
- Make it sweet: slice, add olive oil, maple syrup and/or cinnamon.
- Halve squashes, roast upside down, then add a stuffing.
- Purée roasted squash for a soup or pie!

Tidbit

Winter squash is true to its name: it stores well throughout the winter! The flesh of these fruits is yellow-orange, with variations in taste and texture. Purée it for a scrumptious soup or roast with a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Cooking Tips

- To ease prep, cook winter squash in its skin whenever possible.
- To make peeling easier, halve or quarter winter squash.
- Save the seeds—toss with olive oil and salt, then bake at 375 °F for 20 minutes.
- Sweet potatoes can be replaced by winter squash in many recipes.

VARIETIES OF WINTER SQUASH:

