

Squash... A Fall Culinary Delight!

A Note From Chef Dave...



I visited Vermont a few years ago and it was the trip of a lifetime! It was like walking into a Thomas Kincaid painting. It was there that I discovered winter squash at its finest. Being from Florida, I saw these

crazy looking squashes in the store around October but even as a true culinarian, I didn't know the first thing about preparing and cooking them! While in Vermont, we were at a bed and breakfast and at dinner, we were served a winter squash medley. From then on, I have been hooked! In this newsletter, winter squash will get the attention it deserves. From the most popular varieties of winter squash to preparation and cooking, you too will "fall" in love with these tasty, sometimes forgotten, vegetables.

**Cook Smart...
Chef Dave Fouts**

The Lowdown On Squash...

Winter squash come in many sizes and shapes, but two things in common are that they all have hard outer skins that surround sweet, often orange flesh. Winter squash are at their peak late in the growing season. They have a long shelf life, 2 to 6 months, if stored in a cool, dry place. Squash stores best if part of the stem is left attached to help retain moisture. Unlike summer squash, winter squash must be cooked. They are typically baked or steamed and then the sweet inside pulp is removed and the outer hard shell is discarded. When selecting winter squash, choose squash that are heavy for their size since these tend to be sweeter.

Nutrition Facts...

Winter squash is an excellent source of beta carotene which is the main dietary source for Vitamin A. Vitamin A is essential for normal growth and development, a healthy immune system, and vision. Beta carotene may also help reduce the risk of certain cancers and heart disease. Beta carotene from food is safe. Don't assume that taking a beta carotene supplement is harmless, especially if you have been a smoker.

Lower in calories, winter squash averages 35 calories per half cup. It is a good source of fiber and is low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium.



"You know, when you get your first asparagus or your first acorn squash or your first really good tomato of the season, those are the moments that define the cook's year. I get more excited by that than anything else!"

- Mario Batali

Most Common Squash Varieties

Acorn: Small, deep green or pumpkin-colored squash. Shaped like an acorn, distinguished with deep ridges; golden acorns are the color of pumpkin. Great roasted with olive oil and cinnamon.

Butternut: A bell-shaped, tan colored squash with sweet orange flesh and a great source of vitamin A.

Delicata: A long squash with stripes in green and orange. It's sometimes referred to as sweet potato squash. Once cooked, I like to whip the pulp with unsweetened apple sauce and sugar substitute.

Pie Pumpkins: Smaller than the jack o' lantern pumpkin with tender, sweet orange colored flesh. Great to use for pumpkin soup.

Spaghetti Squash: This large round winter squash didn't get its name for nothing. When cooked, it separates into thin spaghetti-like strands. Its light, sweet flavor and delicate crunchy bite make it an excellent match for light pasta sauces or, when marinated in vinaigrette and chilled, a perfect addition to salads.

Sweet Dumpling: A very small light colored squash with dark green stripes. Great baked and stuffed with sautéed peppers and topped with goat cheese.



Preparing & Cooking Squash... A Step-By-Step Guide

- ◆ Preheat your oven to 400°F.
- ◆ Wash the outside of your squash.
- ◆ Cut the squash in half.
- ◆ Scrape all seeds and loose "threads" from the center cavity of the squash.
- ◆ Place both sides of the squash, cavity side up, into an oven-safe casserole dish or cake pan.
- ◆ Brush the surface with olive oil.
- ◆ Next, turn the squash over skin side up.
- ◆ Place the dish into the center of the oven.
- ◆ Bake squash for 45 minutes to 1 1/2 hours or until you can stick a fork clear through the top skin and down through the flesh inside. The length of cook time depends on how large the squash is.
- ◆ Remove squash from the oven.
- ◆ Scrape the baked squash out of the squash shell with a spoon and place it into a bowl.
- ◆ Your squash is now ready to eat!



Chef's Note: *If you want to stuff the squash, only scrape out enough flesh to enlarge the cavity. Mix the scooped flesh in with the stuffing and then scoop the stuffing into the squash cavities.*

Squash Ideas...

Stir in or top your cooked squash with any of the following items:

- ◆ Light sour cream
- ◆ Fresh chopped herbs such as parsley, thyme, or sage
- ◆ Sautéed onions and peppers
- ◆ Shredded light cheese.

If you like your squash a little sweeter, add a small amount of sugar free maple syrup or honey instead of salt and pepper. In addition, add cinnamon, pumpkin pie spice, apple pie spice, ginger, or allspice to add an extra special touch.

Did You Know...

Squash plants produce separate male and female flowers and rely on bees for pollination.



Ginger Pumpkin Bisque

Servings: 10

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
3/4 cup chopped shallots
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
4 cups chicken broth
1/2 cup apple cider
1 16 ounce can pumpkin*
1/3 cup sugar free maple syrup
2 bay leaves
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 cup fat free half-and-half
1/2 teaspoon vanilla



***Chef's Note:** *Instead of the 16 ounce can of pumpkin, you can use 2 cups of pulp from the winter squash you roasted in the oven.*

Directions:

1. In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat.
2. Add shallots, onion, and ginger. Cook until tender.
3. Stir in the flour.
4. Add the chicken broth and cider all at once.
5. Cook and stir over medium heat until thickened.
6. Stir in the pumpkin, sugar free syrup, bay leaves, dried thyme, cinnamon, pepper and cloves.
7. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes.
8. Remove from heat, discard bay leaves and cool slightly.
9. Pour one third of mixture into a blender container or food processor bowl.
10. Cover and blend or process until smooth. Pour into a bowl.
11. Repeat with remaining mixture until all is processed.
12. Return the mixture to the saucepan.
13. Stir in the half-and-half and the vanilla.
14. Heat through, but do not boil.
15. Ladle into soup bowls and enjoy!

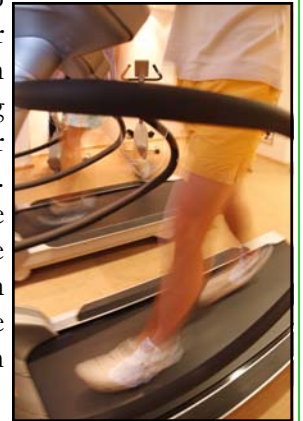
Nutritional Information (per serving):

90 calories; 3g protein; 3g fat (0g saturated fat); 0mg cholesterol; 2g fiber; 250mg sodium

Tips To Help You Get Active, At Any Weight!

*A Guide from Eating Behaviorist,
Brie Moore, PHD*

It's no surprise that physical activity is a necessary part of the weight loss equation. We all know that being active helps you burn calories and excess body fat. But for many of us, exercise is not only a chore but one more thing on our "to do" list. Hectic schedules, fatigue at the end of a long day, feeling self-conscious during exercise, worries about injury, and the "no pain, no gain" mantra can quickly zap our motivation. These common challenges are part of developing any new habit and can limit our access to the benefits of exercise. However, we don't have to be rendered helpless by these challenges. Expert strategies can help you get over the exercise "hump" and gain the momentum you need.



Get Informed!

Being physically active may help you live longer and protect you from Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and other weight-related health complications. Exercise helps control blood pressure and blood sugar, build healthy bones, muscles and joints, and helps your heart and lungs work better. If you have any of these health problems, being physically active may help improve your symptoms.

Being physically active also can significantly improve your mood and overall well-being. Psychological benefits of exercise include:

- ◆ Manage and reduce stress
- ◆ Help alleviate depression
- ◆ Increase self-esteem
- ◆ Boost daytime energy levels
- ◆ Improve night-time sleep

Getting Started Right!

To access the many benefits of exercise, we must first think about what's getting in the way. What are your barriers to being active? When we can acknowledge the typical barriers, we can come up with creative ways to address them.

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Tips To Help You Get Active, At Any Weight!

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Examples:

Barrier: *I don't have enough time!*

Solution: *I can be active for a few minutes at a time throughout the day. I can sit less. I can walk more while doing my errands or schedule a lunchtime walk to get a break from work and to get some time for myself. I can plan ahead and be creative.*

Barrier: *I feel self-conscious exercising around others.*

Solution: *I can be active at home while doing household chores and find ways to move more during my day to day activities. I don't have to go to the gym to be active.*

Barrier: *I'm worried about my health or getting injured.*

Solution: *I will feel better if I talk to my doctor first. I can find a fitness trainer to guide me or sign up for a class to teach me how to safely perform a variety of exercises. I don't have to do activities that are difficult. Gentle activity is activity too! No pain, no gain is a myth!*

Barrier: *I just don't like exercise!*

Solution: *Good news! I don't have to run or do push ups to get the benefits of being physically active. I can make exercise fun. I can dance to the radio, walk outdoors in nature, or be active with friends to spice things up.*

Making a Lifestyle Change

Making even small changes to your daily lifestyle can improve your health and your waistline. Research shows that the most effective weight loss programs incorporate lifestyle physical activity. Lifestyle physical activities do not have to be planned. For example:

- ◆ Take 2 to 3 minute walking breaks at work a few times a day
- ◆ Put away the TV remote control and get up to change the channel!
- ◆ March in place during TV commercials
- ◆ Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- ◆ Stand or walk, rather than sit, while talking on the phone
- ◆ Play with your family - kids, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc.
- ◆ Walk to your co-workers office rather than use the phone or email
- ◆ Go shopping! It's a chance to walk and carry your bags
- ◆ Do chores - mowing the lawn, raking leaves, gardening, and housework count as activity

Sticking With It

- ◆ Select an activity that you enjoy such as walking, swimming or dancing. Have fun!
- ◆ Build up to it - any physical activity is better than none. Try starting with a short walk.
- ◆ Warm up and start slowly.
- ◆ Highlight your accomplishments. Notice when you walk farther, go faster, exercise more often, or follow through when you didn't feel like being active!
- ◆ Reframe challenges - if you cannot do an activity, do not be hard on yourself. Being hard on yourself will not help you to reach your goals. Feel good about what you can do. Remember, you are getting stronger and improving your fitness with each step you take.
- ◆ Notice the benefits. Are you feeling more energetic, sleeping better, or feeling more confident?
- ◆ Applaud yourself! Every step you take is a step closer to a healthier, active lifestyle.

Active At Any Size

Most people can do some type of physical activity. You do not need special skills or a lot of equipment. For example, weight-bearing activities (involve lifting or pushing your body weight), like walking, climbing stairs, dancing, and golfing, provide good exercise. Non-weight bearing activities, like swimming and water workouts, put less stress on your joints and can be more comfortable for some. If your feet or joints hurt when you stand, non-weight bearing activities may be best for you. Lifestyle activities, like gardening or washing the car, are also great ways for anyone to get moving. Remember that physical activity does not have to be hard or boring to be good for you. Anything that gets you moving around - even for only a few minutes a day - is a healthy start to getting more fit.

Healthy, fit bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Whatever your size or shape, get physically active now and keep moving for a healthier life!

***Adapted from NIDDK Weight-Control Information Network*



***Brie Moore, Ph.D. received her master's degree from the University of California, Davis and her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno. She completed her clinical internship at the University of California, Los Angeles, with an emphasis on the delivery of empirically-based interventions in primary and tertiary care settings. She is the Lead Eating Behaviorist at iMetabolic in Reno, Nevada where she enjoys helping individuals actualize their goals for weight loss and improve quality of life.*