A Squash for Every Season

Look for squash varieties that are in season in your local area to get the best flavor and pricing. Some of these varieties are actually grown year round in certain locations!

Common “Winter Squash” include:

- Acorn
- Butternut
- Delicata
- Spaghetti
- Sugar Pumpkins

Common “Summer Squash” include:

- Yellow
- Crookneck
- Zucchini
- Pattypan

Here’s the Skinny on Squash:

- Almost every part of a squash plant can be eaten, including leaves, blossoms and seeds, although people usually prefer to peel thick-skinned winter varieties.
- Winter squash seeds, including butternut and pumpkin, provide protein and iron.
- Summer squash varieties are especially valued for being low in calories.
- The nutrition profile of each squash variety is somewhat different. Generally, squash provide fiber and a range of vitamins and phytonutrients, usually vitamins A, C and B6, as well as lutein, which supports eye health.
- Winter squash are especially valued as a source of beta-carotene (usually the darker the color of the flesh, the more it contains).
- Pumpkins, squash and gourds are all part of the same botanical family, Cucurbita, which also includes melons and cucumbers.

Tips for Parents

Get the whole family to nosh on squash.

- If kids aren’t excited about squash, start out with the sweeter varieties, such as butternut or acorn.
- Add puréed squash to pancake batter or muffin recipes for extra nutrition.
- Grilling squash can help bring out its natural sweetness.
- Summer squash can be enjoyed raw or cooked. Let kids try them both ways. Put thinly sliced summer squash on pizza. Make squash “chips” by slicing raw summer squash and serving them with dip (see Better Bites: Use Your Bean for ideas).
- Acorn and butternut squash can be cooked quickly in the microwave. Simply cut in half, scoop out seeds, cover in plastic wrap and microwave on high, checking every few minutes, until tender. Scoop out flesh and enjoy!
- Kids usually get excited to try foods they’ve grown, and squash are relatively easy to grow in raised garden beds. Give it a try!
**HANDS-ON ACTIVITY** Which squash floats your boat?

Try this buoyancy experiment with different sizes and shapes of squash to find out if you get different results.

**Step 1** Make a prediction. Do you think the squash will sink or float? Why or why not? Write down your hypothesis (what you predict will happen).

**Step 2** Test your hypothesis. One at a time, place each whole squash in the water and see what happens. Is it what you expected?

**Step 3** Analyze results. Which types of squash sink or float? Does size or shape have an effect? Cut the squash in half lengthwise (with adult help). What do you see inside and does this have an effect? Write down your observations and questions.

**Step 4** Draw a conclusion. What caused the results? If you’re not sure, make a guess, then check the library and the Internet for the correct answer. (Hint: Don’t judge a book—or a squash—by its cover. It’s what’s on the inside that counts.)

**Step 5** Use your halved squash to make one of the recipes below!

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**RECIPES**

**BREAKFAST**

**Butternut Squash or Pumpkin Pancakes**

Hide nutritious winter squash in a kid-friendly breakfast with flavor similar to pumpkin pie.

- 1 cup canned butternut squash or pumpkin purée
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons almond butter
- 2 tablespoons flour

**Step 1:** Heat skillet or griddle over medium-high heat. **Step 2:** Combine all ingredients in a small bowl with a wire whisk or fork. **Step 3:** Grease a medium skillet with cooking spray, then pour batter to make pancakes desired size. Flip when they begin to bubble. Serve with maple syrup if desired.

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**LUNCH**

**Butternut Squash Soup**

This sweet soup has a velvety, smooth texture. Tastes good hot or room temperature, so it’s great for the lunchbox.

- 1 butternut squash, peeled and seeded
- 6 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 2–3 tablespoons water
- 1 medium onion, chopped

**Step 1:** Slice squash in half lengthwise and use a spoon to scoop out the seeds and membranes. Next peel and cut the squash into 1-inch chunks. **Step 2:** Heat a large stock pot on medium-high. **Add the onions**

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**DINNER**

**Summer Squash Boats** Makes 4 boats

Make your favorite summer squash into a colorful main dish.

- 2 zucchini or yellow squash
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ¼ cup yellow onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning (basil, oregano, thyme)
- ¼ cup grated cheddar or parmesan cheese (optional)
- salt and pepper to taste

**Step 1:** Preheat oven to 375°. Slice squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out a few spoonfuls of flesh from the center of squash, place it in a medium bowl and set aside. **Step 2:** Brush the cut side of squash halves lightly with olive oil and arrange, cut side up, on a baking dish. Bake for about 8–10 minutes or until squash is slightly tender. **Step 3:** Heat 1 teaspoon of oil in a skillet on medium-high and sauté onions, peppers, garlic and Italian seasoning for 2–3 minutes until slightly tender. **Step 4:** Add onion and peppers to the bowl with the squash mixture, stir in half of the grated cheese, mix well and add salt and pepper to taste. **Step 5:** Spoon the mixture into the squash halves, sprinkle with remaining cheese and return to oven. Cook for 5–7 minutes until cheese is melted.

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**What You’ll Need**

- a bucket or sink filled with water and at least 2 different types of squash (zucchini, yellow, butternut or pattypan are good ones)

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