

# Winter Squash

Acorn, butternut, spaghetti, Hubbard, buttercup, sweet dumpling and sweet mama-with so many varieties of winter squash to choose from, you could eat squash throughout the fall and winter months and never get bored. Nutritionally, winter squash are an excellent choice. They are packed with antioxidants, especially beta carotene (vitamin A), which are thought to help in the prevention of cancer and other diseases.

Winter squash were a staple of Native Americans living in the Southwest and New England and were eagerly adopted by early settlers to this country for their versatility and durability. With their hard outer shells, winter squash generally keep well and can be stored in a cool dry place for up to three months. Winter squash should feel heavy for their size with skins that are hard and free of cracks, cuts or moldy spots. Squash should be washed under running water before preparation to remove bacteria or other contaminants that might be on the outer skin. Cut-up squash can be baked at a range of temperatures from 325 to 425 degrees until the inner flesh becomes soft. Seasonings such as salt, pepper, ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg are often used on squash.

If squash is a new food for your child, help them to become familiar with it before it is served to them. Take the child to the store with you to look at and compare different varieties of winter squash. Let the child choose one and allow them to participate in preparation by helping to wash the squash and clean the seeds out. This allows the child learn about squash and makes them more likely to accept it when it is offered at a meal because it is not so foreign to them.

## Baked Squash

Vegetable Cooking Spray

1 Acorn Squash (may substitute your favorite winter squash)

Pinch of Salt

2 Tablespoons Butter

3 Tablespoons Brown Sugar

1 Teaspoon Cinnamon

¼ Teaspoon Nutmeg

¼ Teaspoon Ginger

1. Preheat oven to 400. Cover baking sheet with foil and coat foil with vegetable cooking spray.
2. Wash squash and cut in half lengthwise. Remove seeds and cut into ½” slices.
3. Place squash on baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt.
4. Melt butter. Add brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger.
5. Spread butter mixture on squash.
6. Bake 20-25 minutes, or until tender.

Makes: 4-5 servings