

This month I'll share some ideas for cooking winter squash; suggest side dishes for your Thanksgiving celebration, and offer homemade gift possibilities. Enjoy! Jan Temple

WINTER SQUASH



Two of the most common varieties of winter squash are acorn and butternut. **Acorn** is usually green in color with deep ridges and is in the shape of an acorn. **Butternut**

squash is an elongated bell shaped squash with a smooth tan skin. Its flesh is deep orange—a good indicator of being a rich source of Vitamin A—and it tastes sweeter than the acorn squash.

Look for squash that has a dry, smooth rind with no cracks or soft spots. You want the rind to be dull; a shiny rind may indicate that the squash was harvested too early and may not have the full sweetness of a mature squash. Acorn squash may have splashes of orange but avoid those with more than half of the rind being orange. Butternut squash should not have any green tinge to it. When possible, choose squash with a dry stem attached.

You may store squash for three months or longer in a cool, dry place. Store it in the refrigerator only if you plan to use it in a week or two. Once cut, wrap tightly and keep in the refrigerator for up to one week.

Preparation of squash is quite simple. Begin by washing off any dirt. The next step is usually to cut it, but the rind can be so hard that you may want to try this tip. Put the clean squash in the microwave for 3 minutes on full power. For such a short time, it is not necessary to prick or poke the squash and it will not explode, but it will soften just a little so that it will be easier to cut. It will be hot when you remove it from the microwave so remember to use potholders. Make a shallow cut to use as a guide for the knife. Place the blade in the cut and tap on the base of the knife with your fist. After cutting the squash through, scoop out the seeds. Acorn squash is often left in halves; butternut may need to be cut into smaller chunks. To finish cooking in the microwave, allow 6 to 8 minutes for a 1.5 pound acorn squash; 8 to 10 minutes for 3 pounds of butternut squash cut into 1 inch slices. To bake in a conventional oven, place halves, cut side down in baking dish. Bake in 350 degree oven for 30 minutes; turn cut side up; bake, covered, for 20-30 minutes more or till tender.

SQUASH FOR IOWA COLLEGIATE FANS

BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH BLACK BEANS - 6 SERVINGS

(HAWKEYES)

1 small butternut squash	2 Tablespoons cider vinegar
1 small onion, chopped	1/2 teaspoon sage
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder	15 oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 Tablespoon water	

Heat the squash in the microwave on high heat for 1-2 minutes to soften the skin. Carefully peel the squash with a vegetable peeler or small knife. Remove seeds and cut into 1/2 inch cubes. In a microwave safe pan, combine the squash, onion, garlic powder, and water. Cook for 7 minutes on full power. Add vinegar, sage and beans. Cook ~2 more minutes or until heated through.

Each serving: 92 calories, 1 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 g Trans fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 345 mg sodium, 20 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 5 g protein.

Source: PA Nutrition Education Program

WINTER SQUASH WITH CRANBERRIES - 2 SERVINGS

(CYCLONES)

Arrange acorn squash halves; cut side up, in a shallow microwave safe dish. Fill the hollow with fresh or frozen cranberries, 2 tablespoons brown sugar and 1 teaspoon margarine, if desired. (Note: canned cranberry sauce may be substituted for the berries/sugar/margarine mixture.) Cook two squash halves, covered, a total of 7 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes before eating. For a 13 ounce butternut squash, proceed as with the acorn squash OR cut it into large chunks, add cranberries and microwave, covered, for 8 minutes or until tender.

Each serving: 160 calories, 2 g fat, 0.4 g saturated fat, 0.4 g Trans fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 32 mg sodium, 37 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 2 g protein.

SQUASH GRATIN - 4 SERVINGS

(PANTHERS)

3 cups cooked winter squash	2 plums, seeded, sliced
1/4 cup low fat chicken broth	1/4 cup brown sugar
Pinch of each: ginger, cinnamon, ground cloves	1/4 cup mozzarella cheese, grated
1/2 teaspoon grated orange zest	

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly spray a small glass casserole dish. Mash cooked squash together with broth, spices and zest. Place squash mixture in an 8 inch glass casserole; spread level. Top with sliced plums and sprinkle with brown sugar. Let sit 2 minutes until brown sugar melts. Top with cheese; bake until the top is crisp and squash is heated through – about 30 minutes.

Each serving: 141 calories, 0.7 g fat, 0.1 g saturated fat, 0 g Trans fat, 3 mg cholesterol, 82 mg sodium, 32 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber, 4 g protein.

Source: Communicating Food for Health

THANKSGIVING OR ANY TIME SIDES

APPLE-RICE STUFFING - 16 SERVINGS

This recipe contains 38% fewer calories, 75% less fat, 66% less sodium and 66% more fiber than regular stuffing.

- 1 cup each: diced apples, onions, celery
- 1 Tablespoon margarine
- 4 cups stuffing (or 1 box of Stove Top® brand stuffing), made without fat
- 3 cups cooked brown rice (instant is fine)
- 1 cup low-sodium broth



Sauté the apples, onions, and celery in the margarine. When they are soft (about 5 minutes), add the prepared stuffing, rice and broth. Combine well and place in covered casserole or baking dish. Bake for 45 minutes at 350 degrees F. Serve hot.

Each 1/2 cup serving: 99 calories, 1.5 g fat, 0.3 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 189 mg sodium, 19 g carbohydrate, 1.5 g fiber, 2.6 g protein.
Source: Communicating Food for Health, Nov/Dec 2002

SWEET POTATOES

For a quick and easy variation to your menu, try sweet potatoes! To prepare in the microwave, simply wash, wrap in a paper towel and heat at full power. Allow 4 to 6 minutes for 2 medium potatoes; 7 to 9 minutes for 4 medium potatoes.

Each potato: 103 calories, 0.2 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 41 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 2 g protein.

SWEET POTATOES WITH RAISIN SAUCE – 6 SERVINGS

- 1 pound orange-fleshed sweet potatoes/yams (about 3)
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar

Pinch each: cinnamon; ginger
Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cube the sweet potatoes. Place all ingredients together in a large covered casserole dish and mix well. Cover and bake until tender, about 45-60 minutes. Serve hot.

Each 1/2 cup serving: 106 calories, 0.1 g fat, 0.03 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 32 mg sodium, 26 g carbohydrate, 3.0 g fiber, 2 g protein.
Source: Communicating Food for Health, November/December 2002

HOLIDAY GIFTS FROM YOUR KITCHEN

HOLIDAY POTPOURRI

Cut thin, cross-sectional slices of apples, oranges, and lemons. Rub both sides with pumpkin pie spice and place on a cookie sheet. Bake at 250 degrees, turning once, until dry (about one hour). Place in a bowl and garnish with holiday greenery.

Source: Communicating Food for Health, November/December 2000

CINNAMON PECANS – 16 SERVINGS

1 egg white	12 packets Splenda®
1 teaspoon water	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon vanilla	4 cups pecan halves

Preheat oven to 225 degrees. Beat egg whites, water and vanilla until foamy. Add the Splenda and cinnamon. Stir the pecans into the egg white mixture to coat. Spread pecans in a single layer on a baking sheet coated with a no fat cooking spray. Bake for 1 hour, stirring three times. Allow cooling completely on the baking sheet. Store in an airtight container.

Each 1/4 cup serving: 177 calories, 18 g fat, 1.5 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 3.5 mg sodium, 4 g carbohydrate, 2.5 g fiber, 2.5 g protein.
Source: Communicating Food for Health, November/December 2000

ORANGE POMANDER BALL

Stud an orange with whole cloves by poking the orange with a thick needle and inserting a clove in each hole. To fix the scent, mix a few drops of orange oil with a spoonful of powdered orris root (available in natural food stores), and then stir in some ground allspice. Sprinkle the mixture over the completed ball, cover with netting and tie with ribbon.



Source: Communicating Food for Health, November/December 2000

HOLIDAY SPICED TEA

2 apples, cored and cut in thin wedges, or thinly sliced orange and lemon	8 cups water
4 cinnamon sticks, broken in half	Tea bags (optional)
24 whole allspice berries	Artificial sweetener (optional)
4 slices (~ 1/8") fresh ginger OR 4 slices candied ginger	

Put all ingredients except tea bags and sweetener into a crock-pot and cook on high for a few hours. Turn the heat to low and let the simmering brew scent the kitchen all day, or strain the mixture (careful, it's hot!) and pour the liquid over tea bags and let steep a few minutes. Sweeten to taste and drink. You may simmer the mixture over very low heat on the stove, but be sure to replenish the water from time to time.



Each serving: 19 calories, 0.1 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 9 mg sodium, 5 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 0.1 g protein.

Source: Communicating Food for Health, November/December. 2000

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and justice for all

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