



Cooking Corner: A Winter Squash Primer

This time of year signifies transition in the garden. Warm, sunny afternoons continue to turn green fruits bright colors, but long cool nights mean summer crops are fading. Their fall counterparts are now in full swing. Cooking greens, like collards, chard, and kale grow quickly and lush in the cool weather. Within a few weeks, an overnight frost will render the thick green leaves even sweeter.

Now is the time for a full bounty of fall crops: carrots and beets, leeks, celery root, crisp apples, and head lettuce, to name a few. And of course, let's not forget one of the most indicative fall crops: winter squash. These hefty, beautiful fruits add seasonal interest to kitchen tables and counters, and a rich component to fall menus.

The variety of winter squash available can be overwhelming. Here's a short primer, but remember, it's hard to go wrong! Most varieties can be used in place of others – just remember that spaghetti squash gets very stringy when cooked, so it won't substitute well for smooth-fleshed varieties.

Acorn: Dark green, ribbed exterior, with occasional blotchy orange markings. Yellowish orange, nutty interior. Best uses: Roasted, with maple syrup or honey and butter. Stuffed & roasted.

Buttercup: Dark green with lighter green stripes. Medium sized, heavy, and flattened. Yellowish orange, sweet flesh. Best uses: Roasted. Roasted then mashed for use in pumpkin pie or baked goods.

Butternut: Tan, elongated, with a bulbous end. Widely available, smooth & creamy dark orange flesh. Very sweet. Best uses: Roasted. Roasted then mashed for use in pumpkin pie or baked goods. Can be used in recipes, as substitute for sweet potatoes.

Delicata: Small to medium. Cream to tan oval fruits with orange or green flecks and stripes. Creamy orange flesh. Skin is tender enough to be eaten. Heirloom. Best uses: Roasted. Stuffed and roasted.

Hubbard: Extra-large, blue grey (Blue Hubbard) or deep orange (Red Kuri), teardrop shaped squash. May be flattened on one side or appear lumpy. Dense yellow flesh, less sweet than other varieties. Best uses: Stuffed and roasted. Roasted then mashed for use in pumpkin pie or baked goods.

Kabocha: Dark green or bright orange bumpy, rounded exterior. Small-medium sized. Very sweet, deep orange interior. Best uses: Roasted. In tempura. Roasted then mashed for use in pumpkin pie or baked goods. In place of sweet potato in any recipe.

Spaghetti: Large, deep yellow, oval squash. Bright yellow interior. Very stringy when cooked. Best uses: Roasted, then sautéed with butter and maple syrup. Roasted then served with sauce like pasta.

Sweet Dumpling: Cream colored squash with dark green stripes, small enough to be single serving. Round with flattened top. Dark orange, sweet interior. Best uses: Roasted. Stuffed and roasted.

How to Roast a Squash

Here are the basics:

1. Wash the squash and cut in half lengthwise(carefully!)
2. Scoop out the seeds. For a nutty treat, clean the seeds, coat them lightly with oil, and roast until golden brown. Salt to taste.
3. Place squash cut-side down on a rimmed baking sheet and add a quarter inch or so of water.
4. Roast at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes or until soft.

Recipes to Try

- [Butternut Squash Orzo with Sage](#)
- [Pumpkin Bread](#) (use any mashed, roasted winter squash)
- [Stuffed Squash](#)