

SQUASH PREPARATION

Begin by washing and drying squash. For butternut squash, cut the squash at the neck (the narrowest part near the middle of the vegetable) and peel with a vegetable peeler.



Cut squash halves down their center so that there are 4 quartered pieces. The squash will contain seeds which can be removed with a spoon.



Continue to quarter and dice or slice the squash as needed. Other squash varieties can be prepared in alternative ways:

Spaghetti squash can be cut in half and baked with butter and herbs. Because of its thick outer shell, spaghetti squash is sometimes poked with a fork (to allow steam to escape) and cooked before being cut in half. Once tender, the inside of the squash can be raked with a fork to

remove the pasta shaped strands of flesh. Spaghetti squash can also be microwave cooked for 8-10 minutes as a quick side dish.

Acorn and Sweet Dumpling Squash are prepared in a classic fashion by being cut in half, seeded, and baked at 400°F with butter, cinnamon, and brown sugar or maple syrup until tender. Most squash can be prepared this way or with the addition of herbs or chopped nuts for extra texture and flavor.

Squash Varieties:

Squash comes in more than just a few varieties. Typically they are identified as either summer or winter varieties. Yellow squash, zucchini, and patty pan squash are summer squash types with a soft skin and won't keep well for long periods. Squash with a harder shell and longer shelf lives are winter squash. Some of the varieties are buttercup, acorn, spaghetti, butternut, carnival, Hubbard, and pumpkin.

These classifications can be deceptive at times because summer squash is typically available during July through October here in Nebraska and winter squash is in its prime during the months of late August through late November. The winter/summer classification system originated because it coincided with different growing seasons that were important to agriculture and cultivation of crops.

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PEAR PIZZA WITH RICOTTA AND APRICOT PRESERVES

Ingredients:

- 2 or 3 ripe pears
- 1 pastry pie crust 9-10 inches
- ½ cup apricot preserves
- ½ cup part skim ricotta cheese
- ½ cup granola
- Mint (optional for garnish)

Instructions:

1. Preheat an oven to 400°F.
2. Core, and thinly slice the pears. These can be peeled or unpeeled as desired.
3. Microwave apricot preserves 10-15 seconds.
4. Unroll pie crust onto a baking sheet.
5. Spread ricotta cheese over the pie crust up to ¼ inch from the edges.
6. Brush pears with the apricot preserves.
7. Bake dish for 10-12 minutes or until crust is golden brown. (If using unripe pears, may need to bake up to 10 minutes longer).
8. Top pizza with granola before serving. (May also garnish with mint if desired.)



BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH BROWNED BUTTER & THYME



Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds of butternut squash, peeled, seeds removed, and cut into ½ inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon dried or 1 tablespoon fresh chopped thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Heat a large skillet on the stove top.
2. Add butter and whisk continually as it melts. Continue whisking for several minutes after the butter begins to foam and until it gives off a strong nutty aroma (This is known as browned butter. Browned butter can become burnt butter quickly, so it is important to remove it from the heat once prepared.)
3. Add the squash cubes and the thyme.
4. Coat squash thoroughly with butter and thyme, mixing with a wooden spoon.
5. Spread the cubes and let them cook for 5 minutes to brown the sides, then stir to flip pieces and brown again.
6. Cover the skillet and allow squash to cook on simmer 10-20 minutes to soften.
7. Remove from skillet and serve warm.

OVEN BAKED SWEET POTATO



Ingredients:

- 1 large or 2 medium sweet potatoes
- Vegetable oil
- Salt

Instructions:

1. Preheat an oven to 350°F.
2. Peel the sweet potatoes and cut into ½ inch thick slices.
3. Sprinkle lightly with vegetable oil and salt.
4. Bake slices on a cookie sheet at 350°F for 20 minutes, turning once.
5. Turn the oven to 400°F and bake for another 20 minutes, turning once.
6. Serve warm.



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