
BUTTERNUT SQUASH

Fun Fact

Butternut squash is in the family of winter squash, and best known for its sweet, golden orange flesh. Squash is native to North America and was one of the 'Three Sisters' planted by Native Americans. The Three Sisters' were the three main indigenous plants used for agriculture: corn, beans, and squash.

Health Benefits

Butternut squash is packed with Vitamin A and beta carotene and is a great source of fiber. Including butternut squash in your low-fat diet along with a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables will help you maintain good vision, strengthen your immune system, and help to lower your risk of heart disease and some cancers.

Selection

This bell-shaped squash is typically about 12 inches long and weighs between 2 to 4 pounds. Choose a butternut squash that has smooth, blemish-free skin and is heavy for its size. If the skin can be easily nicked or scraped with a fingernail, then it has been picked too early and its flavor will be compromised.

Storage

If stored in a cool place (55-60°F), whole butternut squash will stay fresh for up to 3 months. However, if you need to store your squash someplace cold, like in the refrigerator, be prepared to use it within 1 to 2 weeks, as it will spoil quickly. Squash that has been cut into pieces should be tightly wrapped, refrigerated, and used within a week. If you have leftover cooked or pureed squash, place it in an airtight container and freeze for later use as a side dish or to add flavor and color to soups.

Preparation Ideas

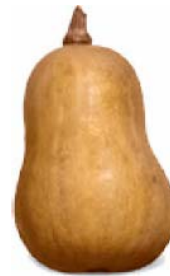
Butternut squash, unlike other winter squash, has a thin skin that is easy to remove with a vegetable peeler, making it easy to cut and prepare. Baking enhances its sweet, moist and nutty flavors. Although butternut squash soup is a winter staple, this flavorful squash is also great in lasagna or roasted with a hint of butter and brown sugar.

FEATURED BUTTERNUT SQUASH RECIPE:

CREAMY BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Ingredients

| | | | |
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| 2 | pounds butternut squash, peeled and cut into chunks | ¼ | teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste |
| 4 | cups low-sodium, low-fat vegetable broth | 1 | cup mushrooms |
| 1¼ | cup nonfat sour cream | ¼ | cup chives, cut into 1-inch pieces |
| 2 | tablespoons butter | | pinch of salt and black pepper |



Preparation

1. Combine the squash and vegetable broth in a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Reduce the heat to medium, and simmer for about 20 minutes or until the squash is very tender.
3. Let cool, and then puree the mixture in a blender. (You may prepare the recipe in advance up to this point: you can keep the mixture refrigerated) in a covered container for up to 2 days.)
4. Return the puree to the saucepan and turn the heat to medium-low.
5. Stir in the nonfat sour cream along with the butter, salt and black pepper, and cayenne pepper. Cook and stir until heated through (do not boil). Keep warm over low heat.
6. Meanwhile, spray a skillet with nonstick cooking spray. Heat skillet over medium-high heat until hot, then saute mushrooms, stirring, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Serve the soup with sauteed mushrooms and chives.

Makes 8 servings

Nutrition Information Per Serving

Calories 152, Carbohydrate 22g, Protein 6g, Total Fat 4g,
Saturated Fat 10, Cholesterol 11mg, Sodium 174mg, Dietary Fiber 2g
Recipe courtesy of the National 5 a Day Program.