



WINTER SQUASH

What is It?

- Winter squash is a kind of squash that is harvested in the fall and can be stored for many months throughout winter. Unlike summer squash, they form a tough rind, which helps them store longer.
- Popular winter squash varieties include butternut, spaghetti, acorn, banana, buttercup, Hubbard, Kuri, delicata, and of course, pumpkin. There are dozens of varieties grown in Washington.
- Winter squash is native to Central America and has been consumed by people for over 10,000 years.
- Squash plants help bees and other pollinators by producing big, colorful flowers.
- Many Native American tribes across North America traditionally planted squash together with maize (corn) and beans, calling them the "three sisters." When the crops are grown together they create a symbiotic system, meaning that each one enhances the health of the others.



Delicata squash, credit: WSDA

Grow It

Winter squash can be a fun addition to a school garden, though it needs considerable garden space, as plant vines will grow three to five feet long before fruiting. Winter squash plants also prefer full sun. Start seedlings indoors three to four weeks prior to planned planting date. Harden off seedlings for a week by setting them outdoors for a few hours each day, gradually extending the length of time outdoors each day for one week. Plant hardened off seedlings outdoors one week before last frost or plant seeds directly in garden. Winter squash may be grown in larger containers, but the vines and squash may need to be trellised or supported as they grow outside of the container. Vines will begin to die off as the squash reaches harvest time.





Make It

Recipe: Three Sisters Soup
Yield: 8 servings

Ingredients	Directions
• 1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil • 3/4 cup carrot, diced • 1 cup onion, chopped • 4 cloves garlic, minced or 1 teaspoon garlic powder • 2 cups summer or winter squash, fresh or frozen, diced • 1 1/2 cups corn, fresh, frozen, or a 15-oz can, drained and rinsed • 1 1/2 cups cooked beans (any type) or a 15-oz can, drained and rinsed • 1 14.5 ounce can of diced tomatoes or 2 cups fresh, diced • 3 cups low-sodium broth (any type) • 1 teaspoon cumin • 1/4 teaspoon black pepper	1. Heat oil in a large pan on medium heat. Add carrot and onion and sauté until onions have begun to turn slightly brown, about 8 to 10 minutes. 2. Add garlic, squash and corn and continue to stir for another 3 to 4 minutes. 3. Add beans, tomatoes, broth, cumin, and pepper. 4. Allow soup to come to a boil and then turn heat down to a simmer until all vegetables are tender to taste (15 to 30 minutes, depending on the vegetables used).

Recipe adapted from [WA SNAP-Ed](#).



Make It

Recipe: Autumn Squash Bisque with Ginger Yield: 10 servings

Ingredients	Directions
• 2 teaspoons vegetable oil • 2 cups onion, chopped • 2 pounds winter squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 2-inch cubes (4 generous cups) • 2 pears, peeled, cored, and chopped or 1 can (15 ounces) sliced pears, drained • 2 cloves garlic, minced • 2 Tablespoons peeled and chopped fresh ginger or 1 teaspoon powdered ginger • 1/2 teaspoon thyme • 4 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth (see Notes) • 1 cup water • 1 tablespoon lemon juice • 1/2 cup plain nonfat yogurt	1. Rinse or scrub fresh fruits and vegetables under running water before preparing. 2. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. 3. Add onions and stir until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. 4. Add squash, pears, garlic, ginger and thyme. Stir while cooking for 1 or 2 minutes. 5. Add broth and water. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Simmer with pot covered until squash is tender, about 35 to 40 minutes. 6. Purée soup in a blender or with an immersion blender. If using a blender, follow manufacturer's directions for puréeing hot liquids. 7. Return soup to pot and heat through. Stir in lemon juice. 8. Garnish each serving with a spoonful of yogurt.

Recipe adapted from [Oregon Food Hero](#).

Eat It

While the nutrient profile varies with the type of winter squash, most types are loaded with vitamin A, a nutrient that is important for eyesight, skin, and cell growth, and vitamin C, which helps with healing, keeps skin and gums healthy, and supports immune function. Winter squash are also packed with fiber, which is important for maintaining a healthy heart and digestive system and regulating blood sugar.

Read It

- The Little Squash Seed, by Gayla Scale
- Sophie's Squash, by Pat Zietlow Miller and Anne Wilsdorf
- In the Three Sisters Garden, by JoAnne Denee and Carolyn Peduzzi
- Pumpkin Pumpkin, by Jeanne Titherington
- Too Many Pumpkins, written by Linda White, illustrated by Megan Lloyd



Spaghetti squash, credit: WSDA

Find It

- Washington winter squash is available at many grocery stores. Check the product label or shelf tag to see where they were grown. Winter squash is also commonly found at Washington state's many farmers markets, farm stands, and other local markets from September through March.
- When selecting fresh winter squash, choose squash that are firm and heavy for their size. Avoid squash with soft spots or broken skin. Do not wash until it is ready to eat.
- Search for local farms and markets that sell Washington-grown winter squash here: [Washington Food & Farm Finder - Eat Local First](#).
- Find a farmers market near you here: [Farmers Market in Washington](#). Many farmers markets and vendors accept WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit, and SNAP Market Match.

Play It

Enjoy the coloring activity on the next page from Oregon Food Hero!



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

**Regional
Markets
Program**



SNAP-Ed

Name _____

..... Winter Squash



Butternut



Acorn



Kabocha



Spaghetti



Delicata



Hubbard



Pumpkin



Winter Squash is fun to eat and comes in many shapes and colors. Which one do you want to try?

