



FACT SHEET

Family and Consumer Sciences

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Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Squash and Pumpkin

Squashes are members of the gourd family, which also includes watermelons, cucumbers, muskmelon, pumpkins, and gourds. Squash was a common food of Native Americans. Archeological research indicates findings of rind and seed in cliff dwellings dated around 1500 BC. The blossom of the squash was the Hopi emblem of fertility. All through writings of the earliest explorers and colonists there are references to squash.

Pumpkin had its original habitat in South America. The names pumpkin and squash, especially in the United States, are applied inconsistently to certain varieties of both. Squash is available from July through September. October is the big pumpkin month, although a few are available in September and November.

Selection

Soft Shelled (Summer Squash)

Selection Tips

- Skin should appear fresh, glossy, tender, and free from blemishes; both skin and seeds are eaten.
- Avoid over-developed summer squash—it has hard rind, dull appearance, and enlarged seeds and tends to be stringy.

Varieties to Look For

- **Crookneck and Straight Neck**—delicate yellow, pebbly skin; gold color indicates it is over-ripe.
- **Zucchini**—dark green, long, and straight, 8 to 10 inches in length.
- **Cocozelle**—similar, except smaller with green and yellow stripes.

- **White Bush Scallop**—green flesh with white tinge; smooth skin, scalloped edges.
- **Spaghetti Squash**—yellow to golden yellow skin, light yellow flesh, 8 to 10 inches long and 4 to 6 inches in diameter. After cooked in water about 30 minutes, flesh separates into spaghetti-like strands.

Hard Shelled (Winter) Squash and Pumpkin

Selection Tips

- Should be heavy for its size, indicating more edible flesh. Shell should have no cracks, bruises, or decay and should be firm.
- Seeds and rind are not eaten.
- Pumpkin should be fully ripe with firm rinds, bright orange color, and fairly heavy weight.

Varieties to Look For

- **Buttercup**—turban shaped and fairly smooth shell; has nutty-type flavor, smooth textured flesh.
- **Butternut**—gourd shaped with smooth, light beige skin; flesh is orange, fine textured, sweet.
- **Acorn**—small, dark green with ridges; orange color on shell means loss of quality.
- **Hubbard**—skin may be golden yellow, greenish-blue, or dark green; size ranges from 10 to 20 pounds.
- Decorating as well as good pie varieties of pumpkin are available.

For information on squash and pumpkin varieties available in Ohio, contact your county Extension educator, Agriculture or Horticulture.

Storage

- **Summer Squash**—Best when eaten soon after purchase. To store, refrigerate and use in 3 to 5 days.
- **Winter Squash**—Store whole in a cool (50 to 60 degrees F) dry area. Will keep several months if mature and stem is still attached.

Yield

Due to the many variables, such as moisture content, size, and variety, it is impossible to give specific recommendations as to quantity to buy. The recommendations below are approximations.

- 1 bushel squash = 40 pounds
- 1 bushel squash = 16–20 quarts canned
- 1 pound summer squash = 2–3 servings
- 1 pound winter squash (flesh) = 1 cup cooked

Nutrition

The “Dietary Guidelines for Americans” recommend that adults need 2–2½ cups of a variety of vegetables daily. Squash and pumpkin are great choices to meet this requirement. They contain antioxidants, Vitamins A and C, some B vitamins, iron, calcium, and fiber. Pumpkin and winter squash varieties are especially good sources of vitamin A. Calories per cup serving: summer squash—15, winter squash—65, pumpkin—40.

Safe Handling

Clean surfaces, utensils, and hands after touching raw meat and poultry and before you use them on fresh produce. To remove dirt, bacteria, and possible pesticide residue, wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water. Do not use soap, dish detergent, or bleach when washing since these household products are not approved for human consumption. Dry completely before storage, especially if refrigerated, to discourage growth of bacteria and mold. We recommend that you only

prepare the amount of fresh squash or pumpkin that you plan to use for a recipe or for a meal. Extra squash or pumpkin can be frozen.

Serving

Squash and pumpkin may be baked, boiled, steamed, broiled, pan-fried, or pressure cooked for immediate use.

Serve Summer Squash Creatively

- Slice or dice and cook in a small amount of water or fry in oil, season to taste.
- Dip in flour or egg and crumbs; fry in oil.
- Good combined with tomatoes.
- Season with basil, marjoram, oregano, or rosemary. Sprinkle with Parmesan or mozzarella cheese. Bake, mash, or fry—top with cheese or chive-parsley butter.

Serve Pumpkin and Winter Squash Creatively

- To bake, cut in half or pieces. Remove seeds and stringy parts. Place cut sides down in baking dish; add 1/4 inch water. Bake until tender.
- When nearly done, turn right side up and season with margarine, brown sugar, cinnamon or nutmeg, or try stuffing with sausage, apples, and cinnamon.
- To boil, cut up or cook whole in salted water; then scrape out of shell and use as a puree in pies, breads, and casseroles.
- Remove from rind and mash with cream, nutmeg, brown sugar, crumbled crisply fried bacon, candied ginger, and grated orange peel or orange juice.

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