

4 Ways to Prepare a Winter Squash for Dinner

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Fall is here, which means winter squash can be found in abundance. Whether you grew your own winter squash in your garden or picked one up at the local farmers market, farm stand or grocery store, there are many ways to prepare and enjoy it. Squash is a versatile ingredient that hides many nutrients in its sweet flavor and creamy texture. Winter squash is high in vitamins A and C and is a good source of

vitamins B6, potassium and folate.

Here are a few preparation ideas:

1. **Bake It!** Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Begin by slicing your winter squash in half, then scrape away any seeds and stringy bits. Season your squash with your favorite spices or brown sugar and drizzle with olive oil or a small slice of butter. Place prepared squash in a baking dish and add a small amount of water to cover the bottom of the dish. Bake your squash between 45 minutes to an hour. Under-baked squash produces a chewy texture and over-baked squash becomes mushy. You will want your squash texture to fall somewhere in between; it should be easily pierced with a fork.
2. **Make soup!** Simply bake the squash as described above but omit the seasoning and place the squash open side down. While the squash is baking, heat your favorite stock and spices over medium heat in a soup pot. Once squash has finished baking, scrape out the flesh. If you prefer chunky soup, use a potato masher to mash the flesh, or for a more pureed soup, use a blender or food processor to puree it. Add the mashed or pureed flesh to stock, stir and heat through. Serve with a dash of pepper and enjoy!
3. **Fry it!** Slice squash in half and scrape away the seeds. Cut squash into small chunks and dip in a beaten egg. Once the squash is coated with egg mixture, dip squash in cornmeal or flour. Place oil or butter in a pan and fry squash over medium heat for about 6-7 minutes.
4. **Grill It!** It isn't too late to fire up the barbecue; grilled squash is simply divine. Cut your squash into large chunks, drizzle with olive oil, and season with your favorite spices. Place squash on the grill in indirect heat. You can also try squash kabobs, which make an excellent side dish. Cut squash into large chunks, dip into honey or melted butter, and place on

the grill. Grilled squash is cooked through when it can be easily pierced with a fork.

Nikki Capener is a student at Utah State University studying family and consumer science education. She is the family and consumer sciences intern in Box Elder County and has loved working with the Extension faculty and 4-H youth. Her experience working with Extension has been incredibly beneficial; she has learned so much while working with Ann Henderson. Her hobbies include running, cooking, sewing and making crafts.