

Our 15 Favorite Winter Squash Varieties





Winter squashes are so versatile you can work them into any course. Problem is, there are so many

varieties that it can be difficult to choose. Here's a quick Squash 101 to help you work a new squash into your repertoire.

1 - Orange Pumpkins - the best use for this squash is decorative. The traditional large, round, orange pumpkins that personify autumn contain very stringy, bland flesh with tons of seeds. You're better off using Butternut squash for any recipe calling for pumpkin flesh.

2 - Orange or Blue Hubbard Squash - Very large and round with tapered ends; even a small Hubbard weighs up to 10 lbs. The tough, bumpy shell is either deep orange or blue-gray. The meat is inside is bright orange and sweet, but rather mealy and watery. For this reason Hubbards are either cooked into soups, stuffing and stews or used as a decoration. The halved shells also make attractive soup tureens.

3 - Calabaza Squash - This is actually a West Indian pumpkin, extremely large and favored by Latin Americans. The flesh is silky and fibrous texture with sweet, mild flavor. Calabaza is not really good for roasting; it's mostly grated into savory dishes.

4 - Spaghetti Squash - This popular football-shaped squash is distinguished by its smooth, light or bright yellow skin. The mild, white flesh inside has a hint of nuttiness and a fibrous, stringy texture which separates into pasta-like strands when cooked. Most people bake spaghetti squash and shred the flesh with a fork before topping with butter or tomato sauce, like a dish of spaghetti.

5 - Buttercup - resembles as small green pumpkin with square-ish sides and a distinct nubby ring on the underside. The sweet orange flesh is rich and recalls the flavor of white potatoes.

6, 7 & 8 - Acorn (Green, White & Golden) - Squat, acorn-shaped with moist, creamy flesh and very mild flavor; usually enjoyed halved, baked and served in the shell with butter and brown sugar or maple syrup.

9 - Butternut Squash - Cylindrical-shaped squash with a bulbous end containing all its seeds. The skin is cream-tan and the cooked dark orange meat is dense, smooth and succulent with a fruity-sweet, nutty flavor.

10 - Golden Nugget - These are small, neon-bright orange squashes that are shaped like small pumpkins. They usually show a little green around their stem, which is similar to a pumpkin stem. They are not as meaty as butternut squash relative to their size, but what flesh they do have is sweet and creamy.

11 - Turk's Turban Squash - Here is the most flamboyant-looking squash of all with its deep orange flat base and a crown of bright, multi-colored knobs on top. The apricot-colored flesh inside is fibrous and mild yet cooks up creamy and smooth.

12 - Carnival Squash - Interesting to look at, Carvinal squash has a squat, scalloped shape with striations of dark green, ivory and orange. The mild yellow flesh has somewhat fibrous texture.

13 - Red Kuri Squash - This vivid beauty is pumpkin-shaped with a tapered knob at top and scarlet-orange skin. Its orange flesh is mild and sweet with a texture on the dry side.

14 - Chayote Squash - This mild-flavored, light green squash contains large, inedible seeds and is used in salads, pureed into cream soups, steamed or sautéed with herbs.

15 - Delicata Squash - Long and oval like a small watermelon with tan and green grooves and yellow-orange skin, its full-flavored golden flesh is somewhat fibrous and tastes a little like sweet corn. Delicata is good baked or stuffed and each squash is a perfect double serving. It is the most perishable of all squashes and will only keep a few weeks at room temperature.