

WINTER SQUASH

Winter squashes are those varieties which are marketed only when fully mature. Some of the most important varieties are the small corrugated Acorn (available all year round), Butternut, Buttercup, green and blue Hubbard, green and gold Delicious, and Banana. Winter squash is most plentiful from early fall until late winter.

Look for: Full maturity, indicated by a hard, tough rind. Also look for squash that is heavy for its size (meaning a thick wall, and more edible flesh). Slight variations in skin color do not affect flavor.

Avoid: Squash with cuts, punctures, sunken spots, or moldy spots on the rind - all indications of decay. A tender rind indicates immaturity which is a sign of poor eating quality in winter squash varieties.

Storage: Refrigerate or store at room temperature.

Use: Serve as cooked vegetable, use in stews, casseroles, and soups, mash as for potatoes, use in pies, breads, cookies, much as pumpkin is used.

Seasonings to cook with: Basil, cloves, fennel, ginger, mustard seed, nutmeg, cinnamon.

Preparation: Rinse, cut into halves or quarters, discard seeds; may be baked, boiled, or microwaved.

Nutritive value: Excellent source of beta carotene (Vitamin A), good source of Vitamin C, high in fiber, low in fat and calories.

MASHED BUTTERNUT SQUASH

2 small butternut squash	1/4 cup packed brown sugar
(about 2 pounds)	2 Tbsp. butter or margarine
Salt	

About 45 minutes before serving: Halve squash lengthwise; remove seed. In large skillet over medium heat, in 1 inch boiling water, place squash, cut side down, and 1/2 teaspoon salt; heat to boiling. Cover; cook 15 minutes or until fork-tender; drain; cool slightly. With spoon, scoop out pulp into large bowl; with mixer at low speed, beat squash with 1/2 teaspoon salt and remaining ingredients until smooth. Makes 6 servings.