

Health Benefits of Butternut Squash



Although botanically a fruit, butternut squash is grouped with other vegetable gourds. Like pumpkins, they grow on vines and have a sweet, nutty flavor. They are harvested in the fall but are referred to as a winter squash variety because their thick skin allows the interior to remain edible for several months if stored in a cool, dark environment.

The name squash comes from the Narragansett Indians (Rhode Island) whose term means *raw or uncooked*. Native Americans valued the squash as an excellent source of nutrition and would bury it with their dead for the long journey to the afterlife. The butternut was developed in 1944 by a Massachusetts man who crossed a gooseneck squash with a pumpkin.

WHAT MAKES BUTTERNUT SQUASH GREAT?

Nutrition

1 cup of cooked butternut squash provides 82 calories, 2 gm protein, 7 gm fiber, no fat and no cholesterol.

Vitamins

Just one cup butternut squash provides 457% RDI* for vitamin A in the form of beta-carotene and 53% RDI for vitamin C. It also contains B vitamins Thiamine, niacin, B6 and folate. Butternut squash contains antioxidants that protect against aging and disease.

Minerals

Butternut squash provides 19% DV** manganese, 17% DV potassium and 15% DV magnesium, and 8% DV calcium. These minerals work together to strengthen bones. Potassium helps to regulate blood pressure. Other minerals in butternut squash include iron and copper.

Fiber

Butternut squash contains both soluble and insoluble fiber which help to regulate blood sugars, lower cholesterol, prevent constipation and reduce risk for colon cancer. Fiber also feeds our healthy gut microbiome.

[*RDI = Recommended Daily Intake vs **DV](#)

BUYING & USING BUTTERNUT SQUASH

Butternut squash should be heavy for its size. Skin should be dull, not shiny. Since the skin is often peeled, minor blemishes are not a reason to reject. However, skins are edible and will soften with cooking. Seeds, pulp and blossoms are also edible. Squash can be consumed raw or cooked.

Store uncut squash in a cool, dark environment but refrigerate once it is cut open.

Most often, it is prepared by peeling and roasting. To peel, cut off stem and blossom ends. It can be peeled with a paring knife or vegetable peeler. It may be easier to handle if cut in half first, then peeled. Scoop out seeds and pulp. Cut into slices, wedges or cubes, depending on the recipe.

Butternut squash can be roasted whole, without cutting or peeling. The entire squash can be consumed, including skins and seeds.

Use raw butternut squash by grating into salads or slaws, cut into sticks with hummus dip, or dehydrated into crispy chips. Seeds can be roasted and used in salads or mixed with trail mix. Toss cubed squash into soups or chili.

Substitute butternut squash for white potatoes when frying, roasting or mashing.

Pureed cooked butternut can be used to thicken soups or sneak extra nutrition into marinara sauce. Add cinnamon and nutmeg to mashed squash for a brightly-colored side dish or as stuffing for ravioli. Mix into oatmeal, cookie or pancake batter, or cake dough.



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Stuffed Butternut Squash

wowitsveggie.com

Ingredients:

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| 1 whole butternut squash | 1 cup fresh or frozen corn |
| 1 15-oz can black beans | 1 tsp paprika or smoked paprika |
| 2 cups fresh spinach | 1 tsp chili powder |
| 3 green onions, chopped | 1 tsp garlic powder |
| 1 Tbsp oil (optional) | 1 tsp parsley flakes |
| 1 1/2 cups cooked barley or rice | 1 tsp dried oregano |
| | 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (optional) |

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line baking pan with parchment paper.
2. Cut squash in half length-wise. Remove seeds and pulp.
3. Place halves face-up on baking sheet. Bake 50-60 minutes until soft when pierced with fork.
4. Scoop out squash leaving about 1" around the skin. Place scooped squash in bowl and set aside.
5. Heat oil in large skillet. Add beans, barley and all spices. Stir in corn and spinach. Sauté until spinach is wilted, 1-2 minutes. Add in mashed squash and stir.
6. Scoop filling into hollowed-out squash halves and pack tightly with spoon. Sprinkle with green onion and serve immediately.

Butternut Squash Linguini

cookieandkate.com

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp fresh sage, finely chopped
- 3 cups butternut squash, cubed
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed, minced
- ¼ tsp red pepper flakes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 12 oz linguine or fettucine

Instructions:

1. Warm oil in large skillet and toss sage to coat. Allow to crisp without burning. Transfer to bowl, sprinkle with salt and set aside.
2. Add squash, onion, garlic and red pepper flakes to skillet and sauté until onions become translucent, 8-10 minutes.
3. Add broth. Bring to boil and reduce heat. Simmer until squash is soft, 15 minutes.
4. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Transfer contents into blender and puree until smooth.
5. Cook pasta, drain, reserving 1/4 cup cooking liquid.
6. Add cooked pasta to skillet. Pour in butternut sauce and reserved pasta liquid. Stir until coated and thickened, about 2 minutes.
7. Top with crisped sage and freshly ground black pepper.

Jalepeño Butternut Queso

ambitiouskitchen.com

Ingredients:

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| 1 ½ cup raw cashews | 1 tsp paprika |
| 1 ½ cups roasted squash, mashed | ¾ tsp turmeric |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | ½ tsp onion powder |
| ½ cup nutrition yeast | ½ tsp chili powder |
| 1 ½ cups unsweetened soy milk | 1 tsp Dijon mustard |
| 1 jalepeño, chopped | Salt and pepper to taste |

Optional additions: 1 cup salsa, ¼ cup green onions, sliced jalapeño

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line baking dish with parchment paper.
2. Cut flesh into 1" cubes. Place in baking dish, drizzle with oil and toss. Roast 30-40 minutes, flipping halfway. Cool, mash, set aside.
3. Add cashews to medium pot and cover with 1" water. Bring to boil and turn off heat. Let sit 30 minutes, drain and set aside.
4. Mix all ingredients in food processor and blend until creamy. Add milk or optional salsa until desired creaminess is reached.
5. For serving, drizzle with salsa, sprinkle with green onion and jalapeño slices. Serve with tortilla chips.

REFERENCES

USDA National Nutrient Database
[Ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/](https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/)
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