

SQUASH SEASON

6 FALL SQUASHES AND
WHAT YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT EACH

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Fall has snuck up on us, and along with it comes a shift in seasonal produce. The leaves changing colors and the weather transitioning (at least in some climates!) are accompanied by an array of fall (and almost winter) squashes in produce aisles. If you’ve ever wondered about the differences between them, here’s your answer. Below are six types of fall and winter squashes, with some insight into what differentiates one from another.



Kabocha squash

A staple of Japanese cuisine, the texture and taste of this squash is very similar to a sweet potato. It is high in beta-carotene, which means it is rich in vitamin A with benefits for eye health. When choosing a kabocha squash, look for one with deep green skin; golden streaks across the skin can also indicate ripeness.



Acorn squash

With a hard and tough skin, acorn squash has a particularly long storage life (up to three months). Similar to other squashes, acorn squash can be used as a sweet or savory dish. Some of its nutritional content includes high levels of vitamin A, beta-carotene, folic acid, and magnesium.



Butternut squash

One of my all-time favorites, butternut squash is delicious when simply roasted with oil and salt or blended into a pureed soup with minimal ingredients. This squash has a light orange peel with bright orange flesh. Similar to its other squash counterparts, butternut squash is particularly high in vitamin A; just one serving of butternut squash is packed with more than 100 percent of the recommended daily requirement. It also contains vitamin C, magnesium, potassium, and some calcium, and it's high in water and a great source of fiber.



Spaghetti squash

Another go-to of mine. Spaghetti squash has a very unique texture; after it's been cooked and then scraped with a fork it resembles spaghetti—hence its name. It may not have as much nutrition as other squashes, but it's a very low-calorie option and often used as a pasta alternative. Spaghetti squash includes some vitamin C, manganese, vitamin B6, potassium, and of course fiber and water.



Pumpkin

Both the pumpkin flesh and its seeds are commonly used ingredients and boast many health benefits. Benefits of pumpkin include vitamins A, B1, B6, and C, copper, folate, manganese, magnesium, calcium, potassium, and fiber. Two of the many benefits of this nutrition profile include eye health and heart health. Canned pumpkin also offers these health benefits in a particularly quick and accessible way. Spices such as nutmeg and cinnamon are often added to pumpkin dishes, enhancing its earthy and slightly sweet taste. In addition, pumpkin seeds are rich in vitamins and minerals such as vitamin K, manganese, and zinc, and have been used by different cultures to help with conditions such as urinary tract and bladder infections, kidney stones, and high blood pressure.



Delicata squash

A perk to this squash is its edible skin, which makes preparing it much easier than its cousins. Delicata squash is high in fiber and vitamin C but is particularly rich in the mineral potassium, which can help control blood pressure among other benefits. Preparation can be as simple as washing well, slicing lengthwise to scoop out the seeds, cutting into half-moons, and then roasting with some olive oil and salt, with additional spices as desired.

Fetal Facial Expressions in Response to Maternal Diet

The importance of a nutritionally robust maternal diet during pregnancy has been consistently proven as vital for the health of both mother and baby. Studies have even shown that the food the mother eats during pregnancy may have an impact on Baby's future taste preferences. A recent study from the Fetal and Neonatal Research Lab of Durham University set out to find proof of the facial expressions made by babies in the womb in response to different foods ingested by their mothers.

Researchers used 4D ultrasound technology to monitor fetal movements and expressions. The three groups consisted of women in their third trimester: a control group with no intervention, a group consuming a kale powder capsule, and a group consuming a carrot powder capsule. Capsules were consumed approximately 20 minutes before the ultrasound, with the ultrasound lasting for around 25 minutes. The findings were astounding—subjects exposed to the carrot made a “laugh-face,” while subjects exposed to the kale made a “cry-face.” The control group showed more consistent neutral faces. A follow-up study will track these babies to see their responses to both carrot and kale when they begin eating solid foods.

Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Intake May Increase Risk of Irritable Bowel Diseases

A general nutrition recommendation is to limit sugar-sweetened beverages such as regular soda, fruit drinks, sports drinks, coffee and tea drinks with added sugars, and energy drinks. Large amounts of added sugars may negatively impact our health. A study published in *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* set out to examine associations between sugar-sweetened beverage intake and risk of developing irritable bowel diseases (IBD) such as Crohn's and ulcerative colitis.

The study included 121,490 participants in the UK Biobank who had no history of IBD at the time the study began. After around 10 years of follow-up and analysis of many 24-hour diet recalls, 510 IBD cases were reported. The researchers found that participants who drank more than 250 ml (a little more than 1 cup) per day of sugar-sweetened beverages were at a significantly higher risk of IBD in comparison to the consumption of artificially sweetened beverages or natural juices. ♥

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