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Butternut is a type of winter squash, known for being good keepers. With their hard protective rind, they store well making them available in the winter. Hence their name.

Native to North America, winter squash are part of the companion planting practice called Three Sisters (beans, corn, and squash). Squash do their part in the triad by providing large leaves for shade and prickly vines to keep pests away.

Winter squash are harvested in the fall just before the first frost. Look for squash that are rock hard with the stem attached, and heavy for size. Butternuts have a distinctive bell shape with beige perfectly smooth skin. The slim neck is solid flesh while the bulbous bottom contains seeds surrounded by a thinner layer of flesh. Store them in a dry, well-ventilated area. Keep a watchful eye, but, stored in this way, they will keep for months.

That hard protective rind requires extra caution in cutting up your squash. Place a damp towel under a cutting board to keep the board from slipping. Steady the squash on the cutting board with one hand and hold a sharp chef's knife with the other. Cut straight down across both ends. Cut again to separate the neck from the bulbous bottom. Now use a sharp vegetable peeler to strip away the rind.

Butternuts are popular for their smooth, dense flesh, deep orange color, and delicious flavor. Roasting brings out their sweetness and adds flavor. Cut your peeled squash into 1-inch cubes, toss with vegetable oil, salt, and pepper, and spread on a baking sheet. Place in a 350°F oven until brown and tender, about 20 minutes.

To avoid cutting, roasting it whole is a good option. The squash will get soft and begin to collapse after about an hour in a 350°F oven. When cool enough to handle, cut it in half, scoop out the seeds and pull off the rind. While not caramelized, it's perfect for soup or mashing.

# RECIPE for health

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featured food:

## BUTTERNUT SQUASH

### Pickled Butternut Squash with Squash Purée

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Yield: Serves 4 to 6

- 1 butternut squash
- 1 T. olive oil
- 1 c. water
- ½ c. apple cider vinegar
- ¼ c. sugar
- ½ cinnamon stick
- 1 clove
- 1 T. tandoori seasoning
- ½ t. curry powder
- ¼ t. turmeric
- ¼ t. cayenne pepper or Kashmiri pepper
- ¼ to ½ c. vegetable broth/stock
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Cooked pasta or lentils for serving
- Sautéed greens for serving

Cut the squash about 2/3 of the way up making the bottom or bulb area the larger portion. Cut the lower part in half and scoop out the seeds.

Roast face down in oven, preheated to 425°F, for 20 minutes, then turn over pour olive oil on squash, season with salt and pepper, and continue roasting for 15-20 minutes or until fork tender

While squash is roasting, peel remaining piece of squash and cut into medium dice (1/2-inch cubes). Bring water, vinegar, sugar, cinnamon stick, and clove to a low simmer; stir to dissolve sugar. Put diced squash into the pot. Let simmer for about 10 minutes, then turn the heat off and let the squash sit in liquid for another 15 minutes. Drain, remove spices and set the pickled squash aside.

When roasted squash is fork tender and cooled slightly, scoop it out into the bowl of a food processor, add seasonings, and puree until smooth. Start to add vegetable stock, ¼ c. at first to see consistency and then more if you want it thinner. Also, amount of broth will vary based on the size of your squash. Looking for a thick Alfredo sauce consistency. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Toss with pasta noodles cooked al dente or pour over tender-cooked brown or green lentils. Top with pickled squash and maybe some lightly sautéed spinach or Swiss chard.