

Vegetable of the Month

Squash



Squash are fleshy vegetables protected by a hard rind. They belong to the plant family that includes melons and cucumbers. Among substances present in summer squash are these two phytochemicals, coumarins and flavonoids. The skin and rind of summer squash are rich in the nutrient beta-carotene, but the fleshy portion of this vegetable is not. To gain the full nutritional benefits of this vegetable, the skins or rinds must be eaten.

Squash has been a staple for the Native Americans for more than 5000 years, and was a mainstay for early European who settled in America. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were enthusiastic squash growers. In the nineteenth century, merchant seamen returned from other parts of the Americas with many new varieties. This resulted in the various colors, shapes, and sizes that are available today.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size (93g)	
Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 20	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 4g	1%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%
Sugars 2g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 4%	• Vitamin C 25%
Calcium 2%	• Iron 2%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

Varieties

Even though some varieties grow on vines while others grow on bushes, squash are commonly divided into the two groups, summer and winter. There are several types of summer squash, but zucchini is the most popular summer squash purchased in the United States. Summer squash come in many different colors and shapes. The different varieties of squash can be used interchangeable in most recipes, because most squash are similar in texture and flavor.

How to Select

Choose squash that are firm and fairly heavy for their size, otherwise they may be dry and cottony inside. Look for squash that have bright, glossy exteriors. Avoid buying squash that have nicks or bruises on their skins or ones that have soft spots.

Storage

Place summer squash in plastic bags and store in the refrigerator. Fresh summer squash should keep for up to a week. Thicker-shinned varieties such as chayote will stay fresh for two weeks or longer.



Make Squash Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



It is easy to make summer squash part of your 5 A Day Plan, and even more so when you know it is free of fat, sodium, and cholesterol, and low in calories and high in vitamin C.

- Try cooking several varieties of summer squash together. This will make a colorful side dish.
- Try adding some of your favorite seasonings (dill, lemon juice or lemon pepper, Creole, chili powder) to summer squash that has been steamed, sautéed, or grilled.
- Squash can be used to make great tasting casseroles or in fast stir fry.
- Marinate and grill it on the grill what a great taste.
- Sliced or grated raw squash can be a wonderful addition to your favorite salad.
- Add sliced squash with dried tomatoes to rice when you cook it.
- Add yellow and zucchini squash to your next vegetable tray.
- Grated summer squash makes a good substitute for carrots in a carrot cake.

Recipes

Sautéed Summer Squash

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two and one-half 5 A Day servings

2 cups summer squash, sliced

cooking spray

1 cup minced onions

1/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp pepper

1/2 cup chopped parsley

Spray sauté pan with olive oil spray. Add onions and sauté until golden brown. Add squash and cook until tender, about 10 minutes, stirring carefully to keep squash from sticking. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve.

Nutritional Analysis per serving: calories 14, protein 1g, fat 0g, percent calories from fat 12%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 3g, fiber 1g, sodium 123mg

Grilled Summer Squash

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

2 medium summer squash

vegetable spray

1/4 tsp dill and/or lemon pepper

Slice squash lengthwise into long strips. Spray each slice of squash with vegetable spray. Place slices directly onto warmed grill. Remove squash from grill when squash is tender but still firm. Place squash in serving dish and sprinkle with dill and/or lemon pepper.

Nutritional Analysis per serving: calories 32, protein 2g, fat 0g, percent calories from fat 8%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 7g, fiber 3g, sodium 23mg

Zucchini Boats

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

2 medium zucchini

1/2 cup shredded carrot

1/4 cup chopped onion

vegetable cooking spray

1/2 cup corn bread stuffing mix

3 Tbsp water

1/4 cup shredded reduced fat sharp cheddar cheese

Halve zucchini lengthwise. Scoop out pulp, leaving 1/4 inch thick shells. Discard pulp. Place zucchini halves, cut side down, in a large skillet. Add 1/2 cup water. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Drain zucchini and pat dry with paper towels. Meanwhile, prepare stuffing. Lightly spray a medium saucepan with vegetable spray. Add carrot and onion and cook over medium heat until onion is tender. Stir in stuffing mix and water. Next, spoon stuffing into prepared zucchini. Sprinkle cheese on top of zucchini boats then place them in a shallow baking dish. Bake in a 350° oven for about 20 minutes or until zucchini is tender and stuffing is heated through.

Nutritional Analysis per serving: calories 156, protein 7g, fat 4g, percent calories from fat 23%, cholesterol 8mg, carbohydrates 25g, fiber 5g, sodium 454mg