

Nutrition Education

Butternut Squash

Butternut squash is a winter squash with a sweet, nutty flavor similar to that of a sweet potato. The flesh of a butternut squash is orange and is surrounded by a hard outer skin that is usually tan in color. Nutritious and delicious, butternut squash is especially high in vitamin A which is important for vision, immune function, and skin and bone health.

For most recipes that contain butternut squash, the squash must first be roasted. Pureed butternut squash can be substituted for canned pumpkin in most any recipe. I find it easier to roast butternut squash whole, especially when I plan to puree it and use it in breads, muffins and pancakes. Simply wash the entire squash, prick it with a fork several times and roast at 400 degrees for one to one and a half hours depending on the size of your butternut squash. It is done when you can stick a fork through the neck. Let the squash cool and you will find it very easy to peel and scoop out the seeds. Then you can cut it up, mash it or puree it depending on how you plan to use it.

In my house, we love the roasted seeds of a butternut squash. To roast your own seeds, clean the pulp from the seeds using a strainer and running water. Dry the clean seeds and place them on a sheet pan. Spritz the seeds and the pan with non-stick cooking spray. The seeds roast in about 8 minutes at 400 degrees; they should be turned at about 4 minutes. Keep a close eye on the seeds as they can burn very quickly. A little sprinkle of Kosher salt (or regular salt) finishes the seeds off. Then, in my house, they are gobbled up!

Below is an interesting butternut squash recipe from *Early Sprouts* by Karrie Kalich, Dottie Bauer and Deirdre McPartlin.

Butternut Squash Fries

6 servings

Ingredients:

½ medium butternut squash

Salt

Nonstick cooking spray

Directions

1. Pre-heat the oven to 425° F.
2. Place the squash cut-side down in a baking dish with about half an inch of water. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, frequently checking for tenderness. Do not overcook the squash.
3. Allow the squash to cool.
4. Deseed and scoop out squash in large chunks.
5. Cut the baked squash chunks into french fry shapes.
6. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray.
7. Place the fries on the baking sheet and lightly spray them with cooking spray. Sprinkle them with salt.
8. Place the tray in the oven and bake for approximately 15-20 minutes, turning the fries over halfway through baking process. The fries are done when they start to brown on the edges and get crispy.
9. Serve alone or with favorite condiment or dip.

