

Recipes... ACORN SQUASH



NOTES & TIPS: This acorn-shaped squash is one of the most widely available among the small winter squash. Acorn squash is a good source of calcium. Baking is an excellent way to bring out the flavors of this squash. To prevent halves from rocking on the baking tray, cut a small slice off the bottom to flatten it or bake them cut side down. Avoid boiling acorn squash. Boiling damages both the flavor and the texture.

You'll need to remove the fibers and seeds from the center of the acorn squash before steaming, broiling or baking. Save the acorn squash seeds to toast for snacking just as you would pumpkin seeds.

A sturdy knife to slice acorn squash in half is a necessity. When halving, cut through the stem end to the point rather than across the diameter.

The deeper the yellowish orange color of the flesh, the sweeter it is. If you end up with a stringy squash, you can beat the pulp with an electric mixer on high speed for ten seconds and then switch to low speed for sixty seconds. The strings should wrap around the beaters for easy removal.

GOLDEN BAKED ACORN SQUASH

3 tablespoons butter, divided
3 tablespoons brown sugar
3 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
3 tablespoons brandy
2 acorn squash, halved and seeded

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a 9x13 inch baking dish. Coat pan evenly with melted butter. In a saucepan, mix the remaining butter, brown sugar, frozen orange juice concentrate, and brandy. Bring to a boil, and remove from heat. Place squash halves cut side down in the baking dish, and bake 30 minutes, or until easily pierced with a knife. Turn squash over, and drizzle with the sauce. Continue baking 15 minutes. Cool slightly before serving.

SAUSAGE-STUFFED SQUASH

2 medium acorn squash
1 pound bulk pork sausage
1/2 cup finely chopped celery
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/3 cup sour cream

Cut squash in half; remove and discard seeds. Place squash cut side down in a oven-safe dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until tender. Meanwhile, crumble sausage into a large skillet; add celery and onion. Cook over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Remove from the heat; stir in sour cream. Spoon into squash halves. Cover and place in oven for 10-15 minutes or until heated through.

SPICY PAN-FRIED SQUASH

1 acorn squash, halved and seeded
1/2 onion, cut into chunks
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon ground cumin
salt to taste

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ground black pepper to taste
ground red pepper to taste
1/4 cup olive oil

Cut squash into chunks and remove rind. Shred squash and onion in a food processor. Place in a colander and press with a potato masher to drain any excess liquid. Transfer to a bowl and mix with flour and egg. Season with cumin, salt, pepper, and red pepper. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Place walnut-sized scoops of the squash mixture into the hot oil. Press flat with a spatula. Cook 3 to 5 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Drain on paper towels.

Makes an excellent taco filler! Serve on warm, fresh corn tortillas. Top with black beans, cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, avocado and your favorite salsa.

FRUITY ACORN SQUASH

1 small acorn squash
1 tart apple, peeled and diced
1/4 cup chopped celery
2 tablespoons raisins
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Cut acorn squash in half lengthwise; remove and discard seeds and membranes. Place squash cut side down in a greased 11-in. x 7-in. x 2-in. dish. Bake at 350 degree until tender but firm (40-45 minutes). Meanwhile, in a bowl, combine the apple, celery, raisins, brown sugar and pumpkin pie spice. Turn squash over; fill centers with apple mixture. Cover with foil and heat until squash and apple filling are tender. Let stand for 3 minutes before serving.

STUFFED ACORN SQUASH SUPREME

1 (6 ounce) package broccoli and cheese flavored rice mix
1 pound turkey breakfast sausage
1 medium acorn squash, halved and seeded
1/2 cup chopped apple
2 teaspoons crushed coriander seed
1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Prepare rice mix according to package directions; cover, and set aside. Place squash halves cut side down onto a plate. Bake the squash in a 350 degree until tender but firm. In a medium skillet over medium heat, cook sausage until evenly browned; drain, and set aside. In a large bowl, mix together the prepared rice, sausage, apple, and coriander. Stuff each squash half with the mixture. Cover stuffed squash halves with foil, and heat in the oven until squash is cooked through and soft. Remove foil, and top stuffed squash with cheese. Continue to cook until cheese is melted, about 1 minute.

CANDIED ACORN SQUASH

1 acorn squash, halved and seeded
1/4 cup butter, divided
1/4 cup packed brown sugar, divided

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Place both halves of the squash cut side up on a oven-safe plate or dish. Put 2 tablespoons of butter, and 2 tablespoons of brown sugar into the cavity of each half. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes until tender. When the flesh is soft, scoop out soft flesh with the sugar and butter, and place it in a bowl. Mash it a little to blend the ingredients. Serve in a bowl, or you could serve it in the shells.

ROASTED SQUASH SOUP

2-1/2 lb. butternut or acorn squash, or sugar pumpkin
2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
1-1/2 cups diced onion (3 medium onions)
1/2 tsp. dried thyme, crushed
1 small bay leaf
3-1/2 cup chicken broth
1 Tbsp. honey
1/3 cup whipping cream
1/2 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350F. Split squash in half lengthwise. With spoon, scrape out seeds and fibers from cavity. Season cut side of squash with 1 tsp. salt; place flesh side down in a lightly buttered baking dish or a 15x10x1-inch baking pan lined with parchment paper.

Add in 1/2 cup water to baking pan. Bake 1 to 1-1/2 hours, until skin is browned and flesh is tender when pierced with knife. Remove from oven; let rest until cool enough to handle. Scoop out flesh; discard skin.

In large saucepan or Dutch oven, heat butter until foaming. Add diced onion and season with 1/2 teaspoon salt. Sprinkle thyme over onions. Add bay leaf. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until the onions are tender and translucent (do not allow to color), about 10 minutes.

Add squash. Season with additional salt and pepper. Cooking 5 minutes, stirring often.

Add broth; bring to simmer. Simmer, uncovered, 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season to taste. Remove bay leaf. Stir in honey. Cool slightly. Puree soup, one half at a time, in blender or food processor.

Rinse pot; dry. Return soup to pot; bring to simmer. Stir in 1/4 cup cream and 1/4 tsp. grated nutmeg; heat through. Taste for seasoning, add salt, pepper, and honey as needed. Drizzle remaining cream; sprinkle remaining nutmeg.

CARMELIZED ACORN SQUASH

2 1- to 1-1/2-pound acorn squash
1/4 cup butter or margarine
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup apple cider or apple juice
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350F. Line a 15x10x1-inch baking pan with parchment paper or foil. Cut each squash in half; discard seeds and remove fibrous material. Place halves, cut side down, in the prepared baking pan. Bake, uncovered, in preheated oven for 40 to 45 minutes, or until the squash is tender. Let stand until cool enough to

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handle; cut into 1-inch slices. Arrange squash slices in a 2-quart rectangular baking dish, overlapping as necessary.

For glaze, in a 10-inch skillet heat butter, brown sugar, cider, cinnamon, salt, and nutmeg to boiling, stirring to dissolve sugar. Reduce heat; boil gently, uncovered, about 10 minutes more or until heated through. Spoon glaze over squash. Bake, uncovered, about 10 minutes or until heated through. Spoon glaze over squash before serving. Don't eat squash skins.

Make-ahead directions: Prepare as above through Step 1. Cover and chill for up to 24 hours. To prepare, let squash stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Continue with Step 2.

ACORN SQUASH LASAGNA

Olive oil, for baking dish
4 cups Acorn Squash Puree
1/2 teaspoon dried rubbed sage
Coarse salt and ground pepper
1 container (15 ounces) part-skim ricotta cheese
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
8 no-boil lasagna noodles, half of an 8-ounce package

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Brush an 8-inch square baking dish with oil; set aside. In a medium bowl, mix squash puree with sage, 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. In another bowl, mix ricotta with 1/2 cup Parmesan, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Set aside.

Lay 2 lasagna noodles in the bottom of prepared dish; spread with half the squash mixture. Layer with 2 more noodles, and spread with half the ricotta mixture. Repeat layering with remaining noodles and mixtures. Sprinkle top (ricotta mixture) with remaining 1/2 cup Parmesan.

Cover baking dish with foil; place on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake until lasagna is heated through, about 45 minutes; remove foil, and continue baking until golden on top, 20 to 25 minutes more.

SOUTHWESTERN STUFFED ACORN SQUASH

3 acorn squash (3/4-1 pound each)
5 ounces bulk turkey sausage
1 small onion, chopped
1/2 medium red bell pepper, chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
2 cups chopped cherry tomatoes
1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed
1/2 teaspoon salt
Several dashes hot red pepper sauce, to taste
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese

Preheat oven to 375°F. Lightly coat a large baking sheet with cooking spray. Cut squash in half horizontally. Scoop out and discard seeds. Place the squash cut-side down on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until tender, about 45 minutes.

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Meanwhile, lightly coat a large skillet with cooking spray; heat over medium heat. Add turkey sausage and cook, stirring and breaking up with a wooden spoon, until lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Add onion and bell pepper; cook, stirring often, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, chili powder and cumin; cook for 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes, beans, salt and hot sauce, scraping up any browned bits. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer until the tomatoes are broken down, 10 to 12 minutes.

When the squash are tender, reduce oven temperature to 325°. Fill the squash halves with the turkey mixture. Top with cheese. Place on the baking sheet and bake until the filling is heated through and the cheese is melted, 8 to 10 minutes.

SQUASH CHEESECAKE BARS

9 low-fat graham crackers (4 1/2 ounces)
1/2 cup old-fashioned rolled oats (not quick-cooking or steel-cut)
2 tablespoons plus 1/2 cup sugar, divided
1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour, divided
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 tablespoons nonfat milk
8 ounces nonfat cream cheese, at room temperature
8 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese (Neufchâtel), at room temperature
1/2 cup squash puree (see recipe below)
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Process graham crackers, oats, 2 tablespoons sugar, 1/4 cup flour and butter in a food processor until finely ground. Add milk; pulse until completely moistened. Transfer the graham cracker mixture to the prepared pan and evenly pat into the bottom. Bake for 10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, reduce oven temperature to 325°. Beat both cream cheeses and the remaining 1/2 cup sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer at medium speed until creamy, scraping down the sides occasionally. Beat in squash puree until smooth. Beat in eggs one at a time. Finally, beat in vanilla, cinnamon, salt and the remaining 3 tablespoons flour. Scrape the filling into the pan, spreading evenly over the crust. Bake until set and the edges are light brown, about 35 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack, then refrigerate for at least 1 hour before cutting into bars.

SQUASH PUREE: Halve and seed one medium acorn or butternut squash. Place, cut-side down, on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake in a preheated 375°F oven until soft, about 50 minutes. Cool, then scrape out the flesh with a fork.

MASHED MAPLE SQUASH

1 acorn squash (1 1/4 pounds), halved and seeded
2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
1 teaspoon butter
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt

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Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Place squash halves cut-side down in the prepared pan. Bake until soft, about 50 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes.

Scrape the soft squash flesh into a medium bowl. Stir in syrup, butter, cinnamon and salt with a fork, mashing the squash until somewhat smooth.