



NUTRITION NEWS FLASH

All About Squash!

Nutrition

Squash is free of fat, sodium and cholesterol. As such, it fits into a healthy diet that may help reduce the risk of cancer, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Squash contains fiber; vitamins A, C, B6 and B1, potassium and folate. It has also been found to contain other natural plant chemicals that may help prevent cancer.

History and Origin

The English word “squash” is derived from askutasquash (literally “a green thing eaten raw”) from the Narragansett language. This was documented by Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, in his 1643 publication *A Key into the Language of America*. Similar words for squash exist in related languages (such as Massachusetts) of the Algonquian people.

Zucchini, a type of squash, was taken to Spain from South America in the 16th century and was grown in Italy 300 years ago. The first records of zucchini in the United States date to the early 1920s.

Did you know...?

Squash is technically a fruit, because it contains the plant’s seeds, but is treated like a vegetable. In addition to the fruit, squash seeds can be eaten directly, ground into paste, or (particularly for pumpkins) pressed for vegetable oil. The shoots, leaves and tendrils can be eaten as greens. The blossoms are an important part of Native American cooking and are also used as food in many other parts of the world.

Students sampled Minnesota-grown butternut squash on November 24 as part of the elementary school menu. In December, students will have the opportunity to sample acorn squash and see a variety of squash displayed in the cafeteria. Your family might want to try this recipe for butternut squash.

Oven-Roasted Butternut Squash

5 lbs. butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1½” cubes

¾ teaspoon cinnamon

¾ cup brown sugar

¾ cup butter, melted

Preheat oven to 375°. Line a 9” x 13” pan with parchment paper or aluminum foil, or spray with a pan coating (like PAM).

Spread squash cubes on the pan; sprinkle with cinnamon and brown sugar and drizzle with melted butter.

Bake uncovered for at least 25 minutes or until tender.

Teachers, parents and students can see photos of squash on this website: http://www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu/squash_promos.html Teachers will find enrichment activities on the website to share with students.