

Calabaza Squash



4760 – PLU

Description/Taste

Calabaza squash ranges in size from small like a cantaloupe to large like a watermelon and has a round to pear-like shape. Its exterior skin is hardened, often lined with large vertical ridges and when mature, its rind can be mottled green to yellow-orange and is often striped or spotted with varying shades of green. Calabaza squashes can also be one solid color or multi-colored depending on open pollination. The firm, yellow to orange flesh surrounds a large, central seed cavity with stringy pulp and many small, flat, and hard cream-colored seeds. Calabaza squash, when cooked, is smooth, fine-textured, and has a mild, sweet, and nutty flavor similar to butternut or acorn squash.

Current Facts

Calabaza squash, botanically classified as *Cucurbita moschata*, is a tropical variety known for its long creeping vines and is a member of the Cucurbitaceae family along with pumpkins and gourds. The word calabaza often signifies several species of hard squash in the Americas with dramatic variances in shape, size, and texture due to natural outcrossing from open pollination. Also known as West Indian pumpkin, Cuban squash, Zapollo, Auyama, Abóbora, Calabash, Calabasa, and Green pumpkin, Calabaza squash is an important crop in developing countries today and is grown predominately in tropical and subtropical regions throughout Latin America. Calabaza squash is known for its creamy texture and mild flavor and is commonly sold pre-cut into large chunks in fresh markets and wrapped in plastic for ease of use.

Nutritional Value

Calabaza squash contains vitamins A and C, some B vitamins, thiamine, riboflavin, fiber, and beta-carotene.

Applications

Calabaza squash is best suited for cooked applications such as baking, steaming, roasting, grilling, braising, or sautéing and can be cut in half, seeded, and roasted as is or cut into wedges or cubes and prepared. Calabaza squash can be added to stir-fries, casseroles, curries, and stews and also makes an excellent stuffing for enchiladas, quesadillas, empanadas, and tacos. When cooked and pureed, its smooth texture is ideal for pies, puddings, bread, or soups, and it can also be used as a substitute in recipes where pumpkin or butternut squash is called for. Calabaza squash pairs well with shallots, raisins, pine nuts, maple syrup, cumin, cinnamon, roasted poultry, fish, brown sugar, orange zest, crème fraîche, chili peppers, corn, lime juice, arugula, rice, and sausage. It will keep 1-2 months when stored unwashed in a cool and dark place. Cut pieces of squash will keep up to one week when wrapped in plastic and stored in the refrigerator.

Pasta with Calabaza Squash

Pasta with Calabaza Squash is known in Italy as "Pasta con Zucca," or in the south of Italy it's called "Pasta con Coccozza". It's a perfect Autumn dish to serve family and friends.

Prep time: 10 mins
Cook time: 25 mins
Total time: 35 mins

Recipe type: Pasta / Dinner
Cuisine: Italian

Serves: 4

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Ingredients

- ¼ cup of olive oil
- 5 garlic cloves
- 2 pounds Italian squash- peeled, seeded, chopped
- ⅛ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ cup fresh parsley - chopped
- 1 cup water, and extra
- ½ pound (8-ounce) box of spaghetti
- fresh ground pepper
- grated parmigiana cheese, at the table

Instructions

1. In a medium size pot, heat on medium, add olive oil and garlic.
2. Sauté` garlic until golden brown. Add the crushed red pepper and salt.
3. Add squash, fresh parsley and ½ cup of water. Cover.
4. Lower heat and simmer for about 15 minutes, until the squash cooks down to a soft melting texture.
5. Take 1 package of spaghetti, divide in half and grab a few strands of spaghetti at a time. With your hands, gently break into small pieces. Continue until you finish and fill a bowl.
6. Remove the garlic cloves just before you add the broken spaghetti into the squash mixture.
7. Add spaghetti, additional ½ cup of water and bring to boil.
8. Using a wooden spoon, stir occasionally. Gradually add more water, increments of about ¼ cup each time, if needed.
9. Simmer on low heat for about 6 to 7 minutes, or until the pasta is al-dente. (Al-dente refers to the desired texture of cooked pasta in Italian cooking. It literally means "to the tooth," meaning still firm to the bite.) Taste and season with salt and fresh ground pepper to taste! When pasta is ready.

10. Turn off heat. The squash should be a creamy texture. Stir again and ladle into pasta dishes. Add some parmigiana cheese on top and serve!