



Winter Squash

PRAIRIE GARDENS & ADVENTURE FARM, STURGEON COUNTY, ALBERTA

More than just a pretty face

Pumpkins may get all the glory at Halloween, but there are many other versatile, vividly colored, flavorful, and nutrient-packed varieties to brighten up fall and winter meals. Sweeter, denser, and more firm in texture than summer squash or zucchini, winter squash take well to a wide spectrum of seasonings and can be true crowd-pleasers in warming soups, casseroles, risotto, lasagna, and even desserts.

Naturally low in fat and calories, winter squash provide significant nutritional benefits. For example, one cup of baked butternut squash contains vitamins A (from beta carotene), B6, C and E, as well as magnesium, potassium and manganese. Flavors are generally mild to sweet, so squash won't overwhelm other ingredients and can easily be incorporated into seasonal recipes.

These hard skinned winter squashes are excellent for storing - up to 5 months in your basement, unrefrigerated. Here are just a few varieties you can enjoy this winter:



DELICATA



Delicata is one of our favorite winter squashes. They aren't big, but they make up for it in flavor. Delicata has a very sweet light- orange edible flesh. Excellent for stuffing and baking. When cooked, has a consistency similar to that of a sweet potato—creamy and soft.

GOLD NUGGET



This has a pleasant flavor, but it doesn't have as much flesh as other squashes and the heavy rind makes it hard to cut before cooking but once cut, scoop out the seeds, fill it with butter and brown sugar and bake that up. Yum!

ACORN (TABLE QUEEN)



Acorn squash flavor is sweet and nutty with a smooth texture. These are quick and easy to prepare. Slice in half, scoop out the seeds, place halves face down on a plate, place in a microwave, and zap them on high until fork tender. Flip them over and fill the center with butter, brown sugar or maple syrup. Eat them right out of the shell. An added bonus is that this squash is excellent stuffed.

CARNIVAL



Isn't it attractive? The best part? It tastes as good as it looks! It will store for several months and still maintain an excellent eating quality. Their flavor is somewhere between an Acorn and a Delicata. This squash is also excellent stuffed with your favorite meatloaf recipe. Yummy!

KABOCHA



The squat, green kabocha—the Japanese word for squash—has a nutty, earthy flavor with just a touch of sweetness. It's similar in shape and size to a butternut squash, but the base points out and not in.

BUTTERCUP



This squash has a dark-green skin, sometimes accented with lighter green streaks. Has a sweet and creamy orange flesh. This squash is much sweeter than other winter varieties. Butternut Squash can be baked, mashed, pureed, steamed, simmered, or stuffed and can replace Sweet Potatoes in most recipes.

TURBAN



An old time favorite for traditional fall decorating. The red color will deepen as the fall progresses. It can be eaten and is terrific stuffed with meat loaf. Sadly today it's cooking qualities are overlooked and it is most often used as a decorative gourd.

BUTTERNUT



A slim neck and bulbous bottom give the butternut squash its distinctive bell shape. The muted yellow-tan rind hides bright orange-yellow flesh with a slightly sweet taste. To make butternut squash easier to handle, cut the neck from the body and work with each section separately.

SPAGHETTI



Take a fork to the inside of a cooked spaghetti squash and you'll understand how this squash got its name. If you're in search of a healthy pasta alternative, try this very mild-tasting squash.

BANANA



This variety is so large that grocers usually cut into smaller chunks before putting it out. It's tasty, but its biggest virtue is the beautiful golden color of its flesh.

PUMPKIN



Familiar to everyone, pumpkins are available in all shapes, colours and sizes, but one of the best known is the Jack 'o Lantern pumpkin which can weigh as much as 100 pounds. It is commonly used in pies or in carving Jack o'Lanterns for use as part of Halloween celebrations.

SUGAR PUMPKIN



Sugar pumpkins are prized for their classic pumpkin flavor, as well as for their thick and fleshy walls. If you'd like to opt out of canned pumpkin for your baking and make your own purée instead, use a sugar pumpkin.

CREAM OF THE CROP



White variety that is not only very decorative, but also well appreciated in cooking for its hazelnut aroma

BLUE HUBBART



This squash was likely used by your great-grandmother. Finely-textured, the flesh is medium sweet and medium dry with a very hard rind. It is also suited for soups and all of your holiday baking needs.

SWEET MEAT



Beauty is only skin deep for this variety. Sweet Meat not only has a creamy dense texture, but its flavor is rich, buttery and distinctive. It makes the best pies, the creamiest soups, the most savory side dishes and the tastiest muffins.



Pumpkins

PRAIRIE GARDENS & ADVENTURE FARM, STURGEON COUNTY

Bippity-Boppity-BOO!

Don't you just love driving by a field of pumpkins? That sea of orange is just a thing of beauty. Farmer Tam loves to grow unique things but it is her love of pumpkins that inspired her to grow pumpkins this far north. In fact, Prairie Gardens & Adventure Farms is the farthest north commercial farm in the world.

"You can practically do anything with a pumpkin," says Farmer Tam. There's of course, pumpkin pie, pumpkin bread, pumpkin soup. You can infuse vodka and get an absolutely fabulous cocktail type beverage. Eating healthy has never been so much fun. You can tell your kids their eating "Cinderella pumpkin stew." And don't forget that even the pumpkin blossoms are edible too. You can stuff them with goat cheese and deep fry them.

How to choose the perfect pumpkin: I've always thought that we don't choose pumpkins. They choose us! There is an unwritten magical connection when when you find the perfect pumpkin. It is fun to watch our customers choose their pumpkin. What one person rejects as ugly, too tall, too short, or too fat; the next person will exclaim and rejoice announcing their beautiful find.

Where will you find your perfect pumpkin? **At a pumpkin farm of course!** Sure, you can put your little one in a chrome shopping cart and choose your pumpkin from a cardboard bin sitting on hard linoleum underneath fluorescent lights . . . or . . . **you can make a memory!**

So bring your child to Prairie Gardens & Adventure Farm and let them experience first-hand where pumpkins come from. Your family can choose a pumpkin directly from the field. We have a variety in all different colors, shapes and sizes.

While you are here, visit with farm animals, climb on haystacks, taste yummy gooey caramel apples and(add more text here.... about Prairie Gardens).

Now, isn't that better than a grocery store? Not only have you made a memory, but you will also help the farm to be more sustainable in the process. Talk to me or anyone of our workers and learn about pumpkins and our sustainable farming practices. You can feel confident about what you feed your family, when you know where your food comes from, and how it was grown.

Carving Pumpkins

You will never go wrong with a Jack-O-Lantern variety for carving. They were bred just for that purpose. They have stiff straight walls, fibrous flesh that can stand up to being carved, and hollow cavities perfect for holding candles. There are several other varieties



"Rouge vif d'Etampes" are a unique French heirloom whose nickname is correct name is **Cinderella Pumpkins** as they resemble the pumpkin that Cinderella's fairy godmother transformed into a carriage. There is something magical about them. Cinderellas make a delightful decorative accent for the fall season, but additionally their flavor is good for any pie or winter squash recipe.

that can be carved also. The Lumina is particularly fun to carve. The interior flesh is orange. When a candle is placed inside it gives off an eerie glow through its ghostly-white skin.

Physical characteristics to look for in choosing a quality and fresh Jack-O-Lantern:

- Choose a pumpkin that feels firm & heavy for its size.
- Choose a pumpkin that has consistent coloring throughout.
- Turn the pumpkin over and place pressure on the bottom with your thumbs. If it flexes or gives your pumpkin is not fresh.
- Look for soft spots, mold, wrinkles or open cuts that would indicate damage or early spoilage.
- Choose a pumpkin with a solidly attached stem.
- A green stem indicates a freshly harvested pumpkin.
- Place your pumpkin on a flat surface to check to see if it will sit flat after being carved.

Painting Pumpkins

Orange Smoothie, Cotton Candy, and Lumina are all good varieties for painting pumpkins. They have especially smooth skin and shallow ribbing. They are a good eating pumpkin, so be sure to use a non-toxic paint. You can eat them when you are through decorating.

Decorating with Pumpkins

There are a number of pumpkins that you can use to decorate with for the fall season. Add some gourds and Indian corn into the mix, and you can create a festive long lasting decorative display.

