

Summer Squash

Growing & Harvesting

Grow. Summer squash can be planted from seed or transplants. Seed germination occurs when soil temperatures exceed 60°F with an ideal range of 65-75°F at planting. Varieties include chayote, patty pan, yellow crookneck, yellow straightneck and zucchini. Squash prefer well-drained soils with sufficient organic matter. Plant seeds ½-1 inch deep in mounds of soil approximately 48 inches apart or 12 inches apart in rows. If planting in mounds, thin to 2-3 plants per mound by pinching off plants at soil level when first true leaves have formed. Consistently water squash through the season. Visit www.msueextension.org for more information or contact your Extension office.

Harvest. Summer squash only require 40-60 days to mature, making them ideal for Montana's short growing season. Harvest fruit when they are immature with thin skins. Picking before maturity encourages continual flowering of plants and additional fruit production.

Selection

Select small to medium size squash with tender, firm and glossy skin. Avoid squash with signs of decay, such as cuts, moldy spots, sunken areas or punctures. Avoid large squash which will have harder seeds and dry texture. Large summer squash are often tough and bitter, but can be used in recipes using shredded squash, such as zucchini bread. Squash between 4-10 inches in size usually have good flavor and are not fibrous or woody.

Storage

Store in the crisper drawer in the refrigerator for up to one week. Do not store in a bag.

Nutrition Information

Summer squash has a low nutrient value because it is picked when it is immature. Since summer squash consists of 95% water, it has few calories (about 20 per medium squash). This makes it a great summer meal side dish. The vitamins and minerals is found in the skin, therefore, it is best to not peel the squash before cooking.

Uses

Broil. Set broiler to high, with rack about six inches from heat. Cut squash in slices and drizzle with olive oil and low-sodium seasoning before placing on a baking sheet. Cook 3-5 minutes or until tender.

Grate. Add raw, grated squash to green salads, muffins or cookies. Use a vegetable peeler to make ribbons in place of pasta noodles.

Grill. Pierce cubed squash with a skewer and place over a preheated (medium-high heat) grill. Cook 5-8 minutes or until tender. Pair squash with tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, peppers or fruit.

Microwave. Place sliced squash in a microwave-safe dish with 2-3 tablespoons water. Cover and microwave on high for 3-4 minutes or until tender.

Preserve. For more information on preserving summer squash, read the MontGuide *Freezing Vegetables*. Visit www.msueextension.org/nutrition and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension office.

Raw. Rinse and dry squash to enjoy sliced in salads or dipped in hummus or yogurt. For raw salads, toss sliced or diced squash with vinaigrette, place in refrigerator, allow to sit for at least four hours and serve cold.

Sauté. Heat pan to high, add butter or oil to coat bottom of pan and add sliced squash. Sauté until lightly brown, about 3-5 minutes, or until tender. Remove from heat and use as side dish or add to vegetable dishes, lasagna, pasta and other dishes.

Season. To enhance flavor, experiment with low-sodium seasonings such as allspice, basil, cumin, curry powder, dill, oregano, rosemary, sage, tarragon or thyme.

Steam. Place sliced or whole squash into steam basket. Steam 6-10 minutes for sliced squash or 12-15 minutes for whole squash.



Food Safety Tips

1. **Clean.** Wash hands and food contact surfaces often.
2. **Chill.** Keep produce and food cool and chill promptly.
3. **Separate.** Keep produce and food separate from raw meats and eggs.
4. **Cook.** Cook food to the safe temperature.

Questions? Click on www.foodsafety.gov

Preparation: Step-by-Step



Wash hands. Thoroughly rinse squash to remove dirt.
Cut squash in half lengthwise.
Firmly hold squash on cutting board.



Place flat side of squash on cutting board to quarter.
Keep the length of the squash or cut in half to grill.



Slice into 1/4- to 1/2-inch thick coins.



Peel the squash lengthwise to create thin strips.
Add to salads or baked dishes.



Grate the squash and use in baked goods.

For More Information:

Montana State University Extension: www.msuxextension.org

MSU Extension Master Gardener: www.mtmastergardener.org

MSU Extension Food and Nutrition: www.msuxextension.org/nutrition

MSU Extension Nutrition Education Programs: www.buyeatlivebetter.org

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Center for Nutrition, Diet and Health. (2015). Summer Squash. <http://www.udc.edu/docs/causes/online/SummerSquash%2015.pdf>

Fruits & Veggies More Matters. (2015). Summer Squash: Nutrition, selection, storage. <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/summer-squash-nutrition-selection-storage>

Gough, Robert E. and Cheryl Moore-Gough. *Guide to Rocky Mountain Vegetable Gardening*. Brentwood, TN: Cool Springs, 2009. Print.

Morash, Marian. *The Victory Garden Cookbook*. Random House, Inc., New York, 1990. Print.

The Visual Food Encyclopedia. MacMillan, New York, 1996. Print.