

WINTER SQUASH

EARN AN A+ IN NUTRITION



Winter squash is at its best from October to November, when it is in season. The Native Americans valued squash as an important part of their diet; so much so, that they often buried it along with their dead to provide nourishment on their final journey. Today, we are now recognizing its valuable health benefits. There are several varieties with each one having a unique shape, color, size and flavor. However, the one commonality that winter squash has is that all varieties are a rich source of vitamin A and a great source of vitamin C, potassium and fiber.

UP IN SMOKE?

If you are frequently exposed to secondhand smoke, then eating more vitamin A-rich foods, such as winter squash, as part of a healthy diet, may help save your life! According to research done at Kansas State University, a common cancer-causing agent found in cigarette smoke creates a vitamin A deficiency. Eating a diet rich in vitamin A can help counter this effect, thereby reducing lung inflammation. This may help explain why some smokers don't develop emphysema.^{1,2}

The carotenoids, or nutrients that give pumpkin its orange-red color, may also significantly lower one's risk of developing lung cancer. Data collected on over 60,000 adults in China showed that those who were eating the most foods rich in orange-red carotenoids had a 27% lower risk of lung cancer. When current smokers were evaluated, they also had a 37% lower risk of lung cancer compared to smokers who ate the least amount of these health-protective foods.³



THE INSIDE SCOOP

Acorn Squash

A sweet baking squash found in supermarkets year-round. Easily slices in half; drizzle with maple syrup & cinnamon; bake at 350° F. for 45 minutes.



Fairytale Pumpkin

The deep orange flesh is very flavorful, sweet, firm and tender. This pumpkin is usually used for baking. Cut it into pieces and bake in the oven or add chunks to soups and stews.



Spaghetti Squash

When cooked, the flesh separates in strands that resemble spaghetti pasta. The yellowest squash will be the ripest and best to eat. Cut the gourd in half lengthwise and remove the seeds, then bake or boil it until tender. Or, wrap it in plastic wrap and microwave on high for 10 to 12 minutes. Once cooked, use a fork to rake out the "spaghetti-like" stringy flesh, and serve.

References:

1 Baybutt RC, Hu L, Molteni A. Vitamin A deficiency injures lung and liver parenchyma and impairs function of rat type II pneumocytes. *J Nutr*. 2000 May;130(5):1159-65.

2 Li T, Molteni A, Latkovich P, Castellani W, Baybutt RC. Vitamin A depletion induced by cigarette smoke is associated with the development of emphysema in rats. *J Nutr*. 2003 Aug;133(8):2629-34.

3 Yuan JM, Stram DO, Arakawa K, Lee HP, Yu MC. Dietary cryptoxanthin and reduced risk of lung cancer: the Singapore Chinese Health Study. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev*. 2003 Sep;12(9):890-8.

Nutri-fun!!!

Q: What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?

A: Pumpkin pi



BALANCED CHOICES
for whole-person wellness