



Best Butternut Salad

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 10 / **Cook Time** 5 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

blend: to stir together two or more ingredients until just combined; blending is a gentler process than mixing.

chop: to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

toss: to lightly lift and drop food items together or coat food items with flour, or a sauce or dressing, as in a salad.

brown: to cook food until it turns brown, crisper, and more flavorful from the heat of an oven, a pan, or the oil it is cooked in.

Equipment

- Skillet
- Food processor or blender (or large bowl + immersion blender)
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Dry measuring cups
- Wooden spoon
- Measuring spoons
- Large salad bowl

Ingredients

Best Butternut Salad

- 1/2 to 1 C frozen and thawed butternut squash (or, if you made the risotto recipe, the reserved

additional browned butternut squash)

3 T olive oil + more for browning squash

1 green onion

1 fresh apricot (or 2 dried apricots)

1 T honey or sugar (or 1 1/2 stevia packets)

3/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp ground black pepper

1 T vinegar

1/4 C freshly grated Parmesan cheese ******(Omit for DAIRY ALLERGY or sub 1/4 C dairy-free/nut-free grated Parmesan cheese)******

2 C fresh spinach, lettuce, or arugula, washed and dried

Food Allergen Substitutions

Best Butternut Salad

Dairy: For 1/4 C freshly grated Parmesan cheese, omit or substitute 1/4 C dairy-free/nut-free grated Parmesan cheese.

Instructions

Best Butternut Salad

chop + brown

If you have already browned the butternut squash for the salad (from Step 1 of the **(Almost) Hands-Free Butternut Squash Risotto** recipe), continue to Step 2 below. If not, have your kids chop **1/2 to 1 cup of frozen and thawed butternut squash**. Add some olive oil to a skillet on your stovetop, brown the squash until soft, and set it aside.

chop + measure + blend

To make the dressing, have your kids chop **1 green onion** and **1 fresh apricot** (or 2 dried). Add them to a food processor or blender (or large bowl to use with an immersion blender). Then, have kids measure and add **3 tablespoons olive oil, 1 tablespoon honey or sugar, 3/4 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, 1 tablespoon vinegar**, and **1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese** (or sprinkle the cheese on top of the finished salad). Blend the dressing until it is creamy and thick.

scrumptious science

Friction is the resistance met when one surface or object moves against another. Friction's effects vary based on surface materials and roughness. When chefs whisk and blend food, they are utilizing the power of friction to create new foods, flavors, or textures. In the above step, friction from the blend helps to emulsify (or hold the ingredients together) the ingredients in the salad dressing.

add + toss

Pour the dressing into a large bowl and add the **1/2 to 1 cup browned butternut squash** and **2 cups fresh spinach, lettuce, or arugula**. Toss the salad with the dressing and enjoy immediately!

Featured Ingredient: Butternut Squash!

Hi! I'm Butternut Squash!

"I've got a long neck with a rather bulbous end—like a bell or bottle! I'm related to the pumpkin, and in Australia, they call me a butternut pumpkin!"

History & Etymology

Squash are one of the oldest known crops—10,000 years by some estimates of sites in Mexico. All squash is native to North America, but the butternut variety didn't exist until the 1940s, when Charles Leggett, a Massachusetts man, crossed a pumpkin with a gooseneck squash.

"Squash" comes from the mid-17th century Narragansett word "askutasquash"), which means "eaten raw or uncooked." This squash is called "butternut" because of its nutty flavor.

Anatomy

Botanically, butternut squash is a fruit and belongs to the Cucurbitaceae family that includes cucumbers, honeydew melons, pumpkins, watermelons, and zucchini. However, as food, it is used as a vegetable. Butternut squash is a type of winter squash that grows on a vine, and when ready for harvest, they have a hard tan skin that you can't pierce with a fingernail, yellow-orange flesh that gets more orange when ripe, and a hollow seed cavity with edible seeds.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Winter squash are cured for the best flavor, as their natural sugars have a chance to concentrate. They are picked with part of their stem left on, then left in the sun, and kept dry for about 7 to 14 days. (Although,

they can also be cured indoors.) Their skin hardens as they sit, allowing them to last longer in storage. Butternut squash is seasonal, and in the US, the best time to buy ripe local squash is September through October.

Look for butternut squash with a solid beige color without deep cuts or bruises. A little surface scratching and marks from where it sat on the ground are acceptable. Select one that feels heavy for its size and leave any with brown spots or punctures, as bacteria and mold could develop.

Store butternut squash in a cool, dark place in your kitchen, and it will keep for 2 to 3 months—it does not need to be refrigerated.

Its unique flavor can be used in both savory and sweet dishes. You can cook it in various ways: roasted, grilled, steamed, or puréed. It is a side dish or an ingredient for soup, pasta, dips, salads, desserts, and more.

In South Africa, cooks use butternut squash to make soup, or they grill it whole, seasoned with cinnamon and nutmeg or stuffed with spinach and feta and wrapped in foil.

The skin is edible if softened during roasting. Roasted butternut squash seeds can be eaten as a nutritious snack, just like pumpkin seeds, or their oil can be pressed for cooking or salad dressings.

Nutrition

Butternut squash is a good source of soluble fiber, beta-carotene, vitamins A, C, and E, manganese, magnesium, and potassium. It has more vitamin A than that of a pumpkin. It is high in water content and very low in calories: one serving is just 45 calories!

Butternut squash has natural antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties and is good for your skin and eyesight.