

# Butternut Squash

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Butternut squash is now available all year round but this is the time of year they are harvested along with their “cousins”: acorn squash, pumpkins, and all the other types of winter squash, coming in all their different shapes and sizes. Because of their thick skin they can be stored for up to six months under the right conditions.

The most notable attribute of butternut squash is its very high content of beta-carotene, which gives it its bright orange colour and which is converted to vitamin A in our bodies. Beta-carotene/vitamin A are important anti-oxidants and are needed for a strong immune system, healthy skin and respiratory tract function. Butternut squash is also high in vitamin C another crucial nutrient to support immunity. So a good food to enjoy over the winter months!

Butternut squash is high in fibre which is important for a healthy digestive system, helps eliminate toxins and can help lower cholesterol levels. It is also a good source of complex carbohydrates which help sustain energy.

Research has shown that extracts from butternut squash can help reduce symptoms of benign prostate hyperplasia, where the prostate gland becomes problematically enlarged. This condition is common in elderly men and can cause difficulties in urinary and sexual function.

See left for some delicious recipes for butternut squash. The butternut squash can of course be replaced with other types of squashes or pumpkin.



## Recipes

### Roast Butternut Squash

*This is a delicious alternative to roast potatoes. The squash has a lower glycaemic load than potatoes so this is perfect for anyone watching their blood sugar balance and/or weight. It goes very well with a traditional roast or salmon and green vegetables.*

Serves 4

1 small butternut squash, cut into bite-sized cubes  
1-2 tbsp olive oil  
Freshly ground pepper

Preheat oven to 200C.

Place squash pieces into a baking tray and drizzle with olive oil. Bake in the preheated oven for approx 40 minutes until soft. Season with pepper and serve.

## Chickpea, butternut squash and feta cheese salad with sun-dried tomatoes

*This is a delicious salad that makes a main meal that will sustain energy levels very well. The chickpeas and squash provide slow release energy and the feta cheese and chickpea are both good sources of protein. The squash and green leaves are good sources of beta-carotene and vitamin C.*

Serves 4

750g butternut squash, peeled and cut into large cubes  
1-2 tbsp olive oil  
250g dried chickpeas, soaked overnight  
½ jar sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained and chopped  
1-2 cloves garlic to taste, crushed  
2 tsp balsamic vinegar  
2 tsp lemon juice  
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
200g feta cheese, cubed  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste  
Bag of green leafy lettuce mix, e.g. rocket, watercress, baby spinach

Preheat oven to 200°C.

Drain and rinse chickpeas. Cover with fresh cold water, bring to the boil and boil rapidly for 10 minutes. Reduce heat and simmer for 40-50 min or until tender. Drain and cool.

Place squash cubes on baking tray and coat with olive oil. Roast for 30-40 min or until squash is tender. Allow to cool.

Gently mix cooked chickpeas with butternut squash, sun-dried tomatoes, garlic, vinegar, lemon and olive oil. Carefully mix in feta cheese, taking care that it does not crumble too much and season with pepper. Serve on a bed of mixed lettuce leaves.

## Squash Soup

*This is a wonderfully warming and filling soup. The squash is high in immune boosting beta-carotene.*

Serves 4-6

400 g dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight  
2 onions, chopped  
3 cloves of garlic, chopped  
1 tbsp coconut oil or olive oil  
½ tsp ginger powder  
½ tsp cumin  
½ tsp coriander  
¼ tsp chilli powder  
1 large squash, peeled, deseeded and cubed  
600 ml vegetable or chicken stock  
1 can coconut milk  
Salt & pepper

Drain cannellini beans and cover with fresh cold water. Bring to the boil and boil vigorously for 10 min. Reduce heat and simmer for another 45 min or until tender. Alternatively use 2 x 400 g tins of cannellini beans.

Meanwhile gently fry onions and garlic in the oil until soft but not brown. Add all the spices and fry for another minute or so. Add squash and stock. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes or until the squash is very soft.

Add coconut milk and cannellini beans. Blend the soup and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.