

WINTER SQUASH

ACTIVITY PLAN



HARVEST for
HEALTHY
KIDS

Butternut • Spaghetti • Delicata
Kabocha • Pumpkin

What's Inside

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★ INDICATES A FULL LESSON PLAN



Circle Time

Use circle time activities to explore fruits and vegetables through read-aloud books and other activities. Read and discuss books, pass around and talk about the featured fruit or vegetable, show and discuss Harvest for Healthy Kids picture cards, play a paper bag guessing game, and more!

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★ READ ALOUD BOOK AND DISCUSSION

Up, Down and Around

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children learn how different vegetables grow (e.g. above ground, under the soil, on a vine).
2. Children learn that winter squash (e.g. pumpkin) grows on a vine.
3. Children are able to name different kinds of squash (e.g. acorn, spaghetti, butternut)
4. Children learn that some squash are harvested in winter and some in summer.

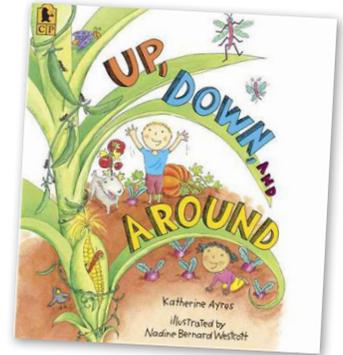
WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Book: *Up, Down and Around* by Katherine Ayres

Acorn, spaghetti, or other small winter squash for children to feel, smell, pass around

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Tell children that this month we will be learning about winter squash.
- Pass around winter squash varieties (acorn, spaghetti, butternut) so that children can touch, smell and feel winter squash. Ask if any student has tasted winter squash. Ask them to describe how they ate it, and what it tasted like.
- Ask if anyone has ever been to a pumpkin patch to pick out a pumpkin and take it home. Ask children what they did with the pumpkin. If they don't mention eating the pumpkin, tell children that pumpkin is a type of winter squash, and we can eat pumpkin in soups, roasted, in pie and other ways.
- Read *Up, Down and Around*. When you get to the pumpkin page, take some time to talk about how pumpkins are a type of winter squash (other types include acorn, spaghetti, butternut, and hubbard). All winter squash grow above ground on a vine, just like the pumpkins in the book.
- Discuss the difference between summer and winter squash (summer squash, like zucchini, is picked in the summer and has a tender skin that we can eat. Winter squash is picked in the fall and has a thick, hard skin that we don't eat.). Ask children to try making a "thump" sound on the winter squash with their hands.
- Point out other vegetables in the book that children have learned about so far.



WE MOVE UP, DOWN, AND AROUND

Get children moving, by putting the book *Up, Down, and Around* to physical movements. When veggies grow "up," children reach arms high over head. When veggies grow "down," children reach down to the ground. When veggies grow around and around, children turn in a circle.

VOCABULARY
squash
seed
vine



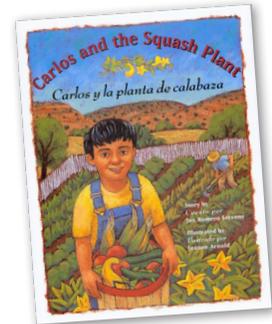
BOOK LIST

Move beyond the featured book! Here are some ideas for books to read during the winter squash month:

CARLOS AND THE SQUASH PLANT/CARLOS Y LA PLANTA DE CALABAZA

by Jan Romero Stevens, Illustrator: Jeanne Arnold

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: summer squash, watermelon, corn, tomatoes, green chiles

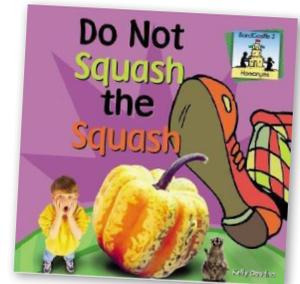


DO NOT SQUASH THE SQUASH

by Kelly Doudna

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: squash

A book that introduces children to homonyms (words that are spelled the same and sound the same, but have different meanings) through pictures and simple text.

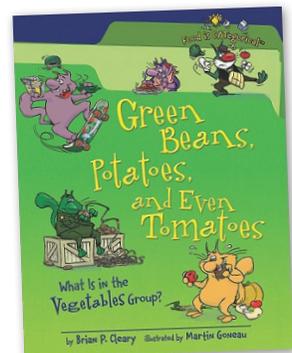


GREEN BEANS, POTATOES, AND EVEN TOMATOES: WHAT IS IN THE VEGETABLES GROUP?

by Brian P. Cleary, Illustrator: Martin Goneau

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: spinach, sweet potato, carrot, bell peppers, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, chard, turnip, collard greens, tomatoes, eggplant, beans, corn, potatoes, squash, spinach, bok choy, potatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, celery

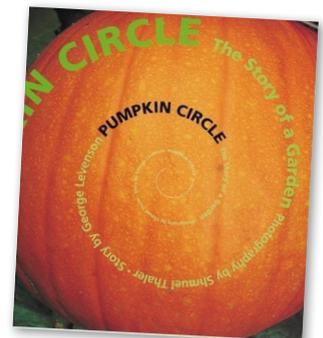
A fun, rhyming book about which foods are considered vegetables, and why they are tasty and nutritious to eat.



PUMPKIN CIRCLE: THE STORY OF A GARDEN

by George Levenson, Photographer: Shmuel Thaler

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: pumpkins/winter squash

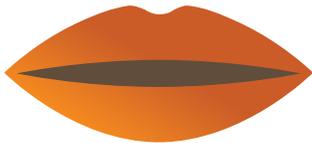




MORE IDEAS

“S” IS FOR SQUASH

Talk with children about how “squash” starts with the letter “S.” Explain that we can eat summer squash (like zucchini) and winter squash (like pumpkins, acorn, butternut, and spaghetti). Squash grows on vines above ground. Ask children to come up with other words that start with “S,” and record their ideas on a large piece of butcher paper or construction paper. Hang the chart paper in the classroom for the month.



TASTE AND TELL

Gather children in circle time and offer tastes of cooked winter squash, like pumpkin, acorn, butternut, hubbard, or spaghetti. Ask questions like: What do squash taste like? How do different kinds of winter squash taste the same or different? How do different kinds of winter squash feel the same or different (e.g. stringy, creamy)? Do the children like the taste? Record children’s responses on a chart, and hang it in the classroom.

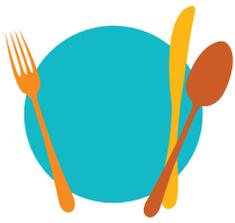
PAPER BAG GUESSING GAME OR SURPRISE BOX

Place an assortment of winter squash in a large paper or other bag. Invite children to reach their hands in the bag and describe the feel and shape of the squash. Pull out the vegetables and ask children to describe their size, shape, and color. Alternatively, use a cardboard box or small shoebox for this activity. Cut out a hole large enough to fit small and big arms through.



PICTURE CARDS

The Harvest for Healthy Kids picture cards can be used any time during the month in which the fruit/vegetable is featured. Picture cards come in three categories: Fruit and Veggie Photo Cards, How Does It Grow? (botanical illustrations of fruit and vegetables), and Same but Different (vegetables/fruits in different colors, or different varieties of a vegetable/fruit). Find ideas for how to use these cards in the Harvest for Healthy Kids Teacher Bites and on the back of each picture card.



Meal Time

Meal time is a great time to talk about fruits and vegetables, especially when a Harvest for Healthy Kids fruit or vegetable is being served! Use meal time to review something the children learned (e.g. that squash grows on a vine). You can also use hand stamps during meal time to congratulate children who “tried something new today!”

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MEAL TIME IDEAS

PLEASE PASS THE VEGGIES!

Children may be more likely to try new fruits and vegetables if they can touch and see the fruit or vegetable before it is cooked. When winter squash (e.g. butternut, kabocha) are served, try to have a few raw, whole winter squash on hand to pass around the tables. Talk with children about how whole vegetables like these were cut up and cooked by the cooks, so that children and teachers can have delicious, healthy food to eat!

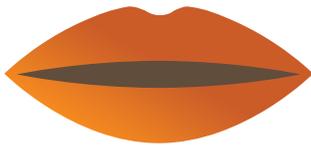
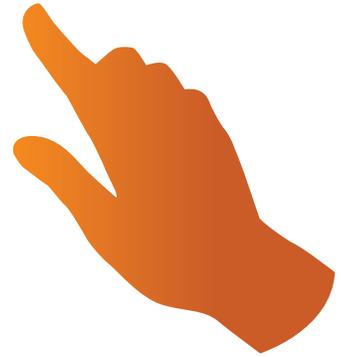


TABLE TALK

When children are trying winter squash during meal time, ask them questions, like:

- What do they taste like? Are they soft? Crunchy? Sweet? Salty?
- Does anyone have a garden? What do you grow in your garden?
- Has anyone tried to grow winter squash, like pumpkins, or butternut squash?
- How do winter squash grow? (on a vine)
- What part of the winter squash can we eat?

“S” IS FOR SQUASH

Talk with children about how “squash” starts with the letter “S.” Explain that we can eat summer squash (like zucchini) and winter squash (like pumpkins, acorn, butternut, and spaghetti). Squash grow on vines above ground. Ask children to come up with other words that start with “S” as you eat together.





Activity Time

Activity Time (e.g. “free choice” in Head Start centers, or full group activities) is a perfect time to introduce more activities like cooking projects and sensory explorations of fruits and vegetables.

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★ INDICATES A FULL LESSON PLAN



★ SENSORY EXPLORATION

Investigating Seeds

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children explore seeds for different kinds of squash and learn that seeds come in different shapes and sizes.
2. Children describe the feel, smell, taste, color of winter squash and squash seeds.
3. Children use scientific inquiry skills to predict, observe, describe and compare.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

3-4 kinds of winter squash (acorn, butternut, delicata, hubbard, kabocha, spaghetti, etc.), spoons, bowls for seeds, colander

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Gather the children in circle time. Tell the children: today we will be exploring winter squash!
- Take out the 3-4 kinds of winter squash and name them for the children.
- Have the children describe the squash and guess the color of the seeds inside. Have children guess which squash will have the most seeds.
- Wash winter squash and cut in half (children can help wash squash; teachers cut squash in half, being careful to stabilize the squash so it doesn't roll. Placing it on a damp towel on top of a cutting board works nicely.)
- Show the children the inside of each squash. Ask children to note the color of the seeds.
- Give the children a piece of the squash and let them scoop out seeds.
- Ask children to describe the color, texture, and smell of the squash and seeds.
- Rinse the seeds in a colander and return to table.
- Have children make piles of the seeds from each squash. Which squash has the biggest pile of seeds?
- Use other questions to direct children's explorations, like:
 - What colors are the squashes?
 - Which squash is the biggest? The smallest? Which is the fattest? Which is the longest?
 - How does the squash feel? (Smooth, bumpy, hard...)
 - What does the squash look like inside? What color are the seeds? Which squash has the most seeds? Which seeds are the biggest?
 - How are the squash seeds the same or different?



CLAP IT OUT

Clap out the syllables of each winter squash you explore.

BUT-TER-NUT

DE-LI-CA-TA

SPA-GHE-TTI





★ COOKING ACTIVITY AND TASTING

Spaghetti Squash

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children participate in cooking activity and learn how to make spaghetti squash plain or with tomato sauce.
2. Children learn some different ways that winter squash are cooked (e.g. roasted, boiled, sautéed, in soup).
3. Children taste spaghetti squash-either plain or with sauce.
4. Children explore and describe the unique texture of spaghetti squash.
5. Children practice fine motor skills and coordination when combining ingredients.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

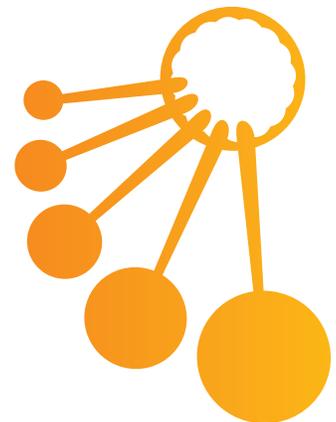
Ingredients for recipe **(next page)**

Cooking tools: large spoons for scooping seeds, forks (one for each child) for scooping flesh, hot plate, large pot for boiling squash, medium pot for cooking sauce, large knife, and cutting board.

Small bowls or cups for tasting

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Children wash their hands and sit or stand around the activity table. Announce, “Today we are going to make a recipe called Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce.” Ask if anyone has tasted spaghetti, and if anyone has tasted spaghetti squash.
- Introduce each ingredient as you place it on the activity table.
- Children can take turns helping scoop out the seeds from both squash halves.
- Children can use a fork to scrape the squash flesh into “spaghetti” strands.
- If making tomato sauce:
 - Children can measure ingredients for the sauce and/or add to the pot.
 - Children can take turns stirring the sauce.
 - Children can make a “nest” in the squash and can help add sauce.
 - Children can help toss spaghetti squash with tomato sauce. If desired, have children mix a small amount of spaghetti squash with a small amount of sauce in smaller bowls.
- As always, remember to keep children away from all sharp cutting utensils, electrical devices, and hot food and surfaces at all times.





★ COOKING ACTIVITY AND TASTING

Spaghetti Squash Plain or with Tomato Sauce

SPAGHETTI SQUASH PLAIN OR WITH TOMATO SAUCE

8- ½ cup servings – enough for tastes for children*

**Adapted from Yvonne Nickels in What's Cookin' II: A Collection of Recipes from Nebraska Child Care Providers*

INGREDIENTS

1 spaghetti squash (2-2½ lbs.)

Salt

Butter, melted OR olive oil

Tomato Sauce (optional):

¼ cup chopped onion

1 clove, minced

1 Tbsp. vegetable oil

1 15 oz. can tomatoes, crushed

1 tsp. dried Italian seasoning (or a mix of dried basil and oregano)

¼ tsp. each: salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat a pot of water large enough to hold one to two squash (cook in two to three batches, depending on your cooking capacity). When water is boiling, drop in squash and cook for 20-30 minutes, or until tender. Be careful not to cook too long, or squash will get mushy and lose its fun texture. When a fork goes easily into the flesh, the squash is done.
2. If making tomato sauce, while squash is boiling:
 - a. Cook onion and garlic in a medium size pot until soft (not brown)
 - b. Stir in tomatoes, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper
 - c. Bring sauce to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring frequently
 - d. Set aside and keep warm
3. Cool the squash 10-20 minutes, until easy to handle, then cut in half.
4. Scoop out the squash seeds from each half.
5. Using a fork, shred the squash flesh into spaghetti-like strands.
6. To serve plain:
 - a. Place spaghetti squash strands in a bowl. Toss with a pinch of salt and a Tbs. or less of melted butter or olive oil.
7. To serve with tomato sauce:
 - a. Place the squash “spaghetti” in a bowl and make a “nest” for the sauce.
 - b. Add sauce to the bowl. Toss spaghetti squash with tomato sauce



★ HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS RECIPE BOOK

Have children decorate and put together a recipe book throughout the year, including each month's cooking activity recipe!

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children create a drawing to accompany the Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce recipe, and use crayons, markers or paint to create art.
2. Children tell the class about their artwork.
3. Children will remember and connect experiences with beets, and recall what they have learned during the month.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Printed copies of family versions of recipes for each child; recipe on ½ of page (8 ½ x 11), crayons, markers, paint, magazines with fruits and vegetables, crayons, scissors, glue

Winter squash, for display

Family Recipe: Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce **(page 14)**



HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS RECIPE BOOK:

Start this activity in the beginning of the year. Have each child decorate a cover for his or her fruit & veggie recipe book. Bind each child's book with enough pages for a recipe and picture for each month (8 months). Have children take the recipe book home with the welcome newsletter. Then, each month, using the recipe decorating activity to add recipes to the books! Children can take home their decorated recipe with a monthly newsletter, or just pinned to their bags or clothing!



Family Recipe

SPAGHETTI SQUASH WITH TOMATO SAUCE*

Serves 6

**Adapted from Yvonne Nickels in What's Cookin' II*

INGREDIENTS

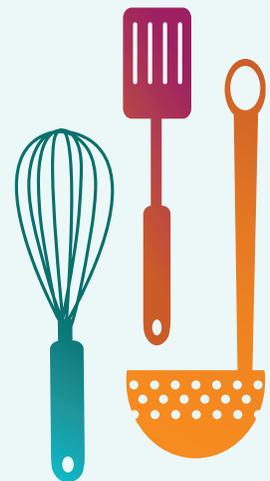
- 1 spaghetti squash (2-2½ lbs.)
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 15 oz. can tomatoes, crushed
- 1 tsp. dried Italian seasoning (or a mix of dried basil and oregano)
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

DIRECTIONS

Prepare sauce: Cook onion and garlic in hot oil until tender. Do not brown. Stir in tomatoes, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring often.

Cook squash: Squash can be boiled or roasted. Boil whole for 20-30 minutes until tender (test with a fork). Let squash cool slightly, then cut in half and scoop out seeds. OR, cut squash in half lengthwise and scoop out seeds. Prick skin with fork. Bake in a 350° oven for 30-40 minutes until tender.

Make “spaghetti”: Scrape squash from shells. Use a fork to shred squash. Serve tomato sauce over squash.





★ CREATIVE ARTS

Watch our Garden Grow

OBJECTIVES:

1. Children learn that we can grow winter squash in a garden.
2. Children review how winter squash grows.
3. Children make their own winter squash to display in the classroom “garden.”

WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Small paper plates
Colored paper, yarn, paint, or other art supplies
Scissors
Glue



WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Make a pumpkin using a paper plate and colored paper. Create the pumpkin fruit on the paper plate and paste a green or brown “stem” made out of colored paper to the plate. Use your plate as an example to show the class.
- Prepare brown or green “stems” for children.
- Tell children: we can grow winter squash in a garden. Ask children if anyone has ever grown winter squash in a garden.
- Ask children to remember how winter squash grows (above the ground, on a vine).
- Show children example plate and tell children we will be making pumpkins for our “class garden.”
- Provide children with plates, stems, colored paper, scissors, and glue.
- Invite children to make their own pumpkin for the “class garden.”
- Designate a space on a wall in the classroom for the “class garden.” Add to the wall each month with children’s colorful creations of the featured fruits and vegetables in the Harvest for Healthy Kids program.
- If desired, connect children’s pumpkins in the garden with yarn “vines.”



Fast and Fun

Beyond circle time, meal time, and activity time, there are other simple ways to highlight the Harvest for Healthy Kids program, and teach children about fruits and vegetables. Take a look at the ideas below for easy ways to have fun with Harvest for Healthy Kids throughout the day.

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FAST AND FUN

PUPPETS

If you have puppets in the classroom, bring them into your Harvest for Healthy Kids activities! Try having a puppet introduce the featured fruit or vegetable at the beginning of the month. Puppets might also be used to introduce ingredients for a cooking activity, or during other activities.

HAND STAMPS

Use your favorite hand stamps or stickers to acknowledge children's participation in Harvest for Healthy Kids activities (e.g. cooking, sensory exploration, planting, reading) throughout the month.

DISCOVERY TABLE

Cut an assortment of winter squash in halves or quarters, and leave some whole. Place vegetables on the "discovery table," "sensory table," or another area of the classroom, so children can explore the feel, smell, and looks of the vegetables. Winter squash store well, especially when kept in a cold, dry place. Cut squash should be covered with plastic and refrigerated in the evenings.

TASTING CHART

Create a chart with children's names on the left side in rows and the featured fruit and vegetable names on the top in columns. Each month, give children a stamp or sticker in the fruit/vegetable box next to their name if they tasted the fruit or vegetable anytime during the month. Hang the tasting chart in the classroom.

CHANT-ALONG

Squish Squash

Squish Squash, wash the squash
Squish Squash, dry the squash
Squish Squash, cut the squash
Squish Squash, scoop the squash
Squish Squash, cook the squash
Squish Squash, mash the squash
Squish Squash, eat the squash
So, so good!

From: "Squish Squash." Food For Thought. Sacramento. California Department of Education, 2008.



ABOUT HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS

Harvest for Healthy Kids is a nutrition program designed to introduce children in early care and education settings to a wide variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables through their meals and snacks and classroom activities. Monthly family engagement activities support parents in promoting healthy eating habits at home. Harvest for Healthy Kids is a partnership between Mt. Hood Community College Head Start and Early Head Start and the School of Community Health at Portland State University.

