

COOKING LIGHT

# Acorn Squash

By Katie Beck Photography by Marty Shortum Studio



**T**he dark green shell of the acorn squash surrounds glowing, pumpkin-colored flesh that has a flavor as pleasant as its appearance. When sliced into rings, the deeply ridged shell displays a delicately fluted edge that dresses up the final presentation, and when halved and baked, the colorful contrast of the green shell with the warm toned flesh makes a visually stunning dish vibrant with fall hues.

At the store, a quality squash will have a smooth, dry rind free of soft spots and cracks. A dull and deep colored rind is a good sign, and a splash of orange on the shell is normal, but it should be predominately green. Squash is available throughout the year, but because it is harvested in late summer and early fall, it is

more plentiful in autumn and winter. If it is hard to find at the store, it can always be ordered from Melissa's Produce (see our article in Food Overnight).

Aside from being easy on the eyes, acorn squash is great for the body. It is an outstanding source of dietary fiber and vitamins C and B. Its brightly colored flesh signifies high antioxidant levels, and it is also an excellent source of magnesium, which is an essential mineral needed for bone, protein and fatty acid formation along with other key functions in the body. Maintaining high energy levels requires the intake of beneficial carbohydrates, which are abundant in this winter vegetable, making it a great energy booster for an exercise session. Athletes tired of turning

to bananas after a tough workout can add squash to their menu because it has a substantial amount of potassium, which is a great natural remedy against muscle cramps and soreness if eaten within two hours after exercising. Acorn squash is a delicious addition to the diet that is packed with essential nutrients and flavor.

Roasting this squash caramelizes the natural sugars within the vegetable and brings out its sweet, earthy flavor. The tough green shell can be challenging to slice into rings (even with a sharp knife and a firm grip), but a minute in the microwave will soften the squash and ease the slicing process. The following recipe for baked acorn squash with pine nuts and garlic is easy to prepare, and it features the flavor of this winter veggie.

### Baked Acorn Squash with Pine Nuts and Garlic

Serves 4

- 2 small acorn squash (about 2 lbs. in total weight)
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ tsp salt
- 8 garlic cloves, halved
- 1 tbsp pine nuts
- ¼ tsp freshly ground pepper

Preheat oven to 400. Coat a shallow baking dish with cooking spray.

Cut the squash crosswise into rings ¼ inch thick, leaving the peel intact. Scrape the seeds out of the center of each ring and discard. Place the rings in the prepared baking dish in a single layer, allowing them to overlap slightly. Brush with 1¼ teaspoons of the olive oil and sprinkle with ½ teaspoon of salt. Bake for fifteen minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, toss the garlic with the remaining 1½ teaspoons of olive oil. Sprinkle the garlic and pine nuts evenly over the squash rings and continue baking until the squash is tender and the pine nuts are lightly browned, about 10-15 minutes longer. Season the squash rings with the remaining ½ teaspoon of salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

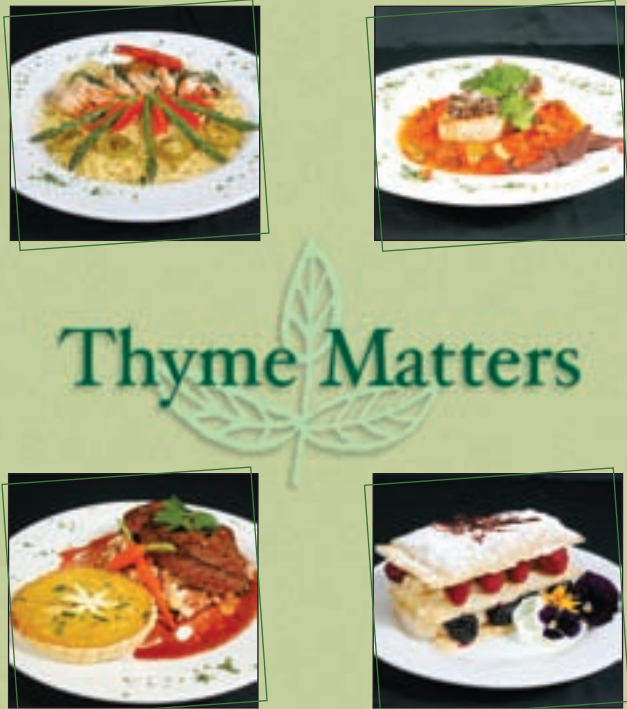
#### Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories.....	138	Monounsaturated fat....	3g
Kilojoules.....	577	Cholesterol.....	0 mg
Protein.....	3g	Sodium.....	154 mg
Carbohydrate.....	25g	Fiber.....	7g
Total fat.....	5g		
Saturated fat.....	1g		

INFO

Recipe courtesy of *The New Mayo Clinic Cookbook*

Acorn squash provided by Melissa's Produce  
www.melissas.com



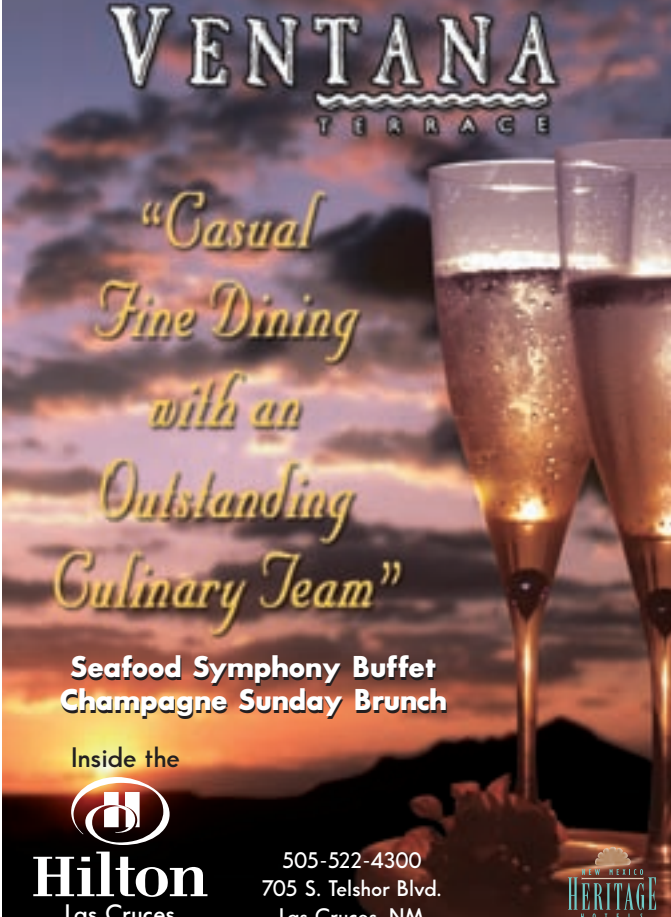
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