

Preserving Pumpkin and Winter Squash

COOKING

The easiest way to prepare the pulp of pumpkins or hard winter squashes is to bake them in the oven. To do so, wash the pumpkin or squash and cut in half crosswise. Remove its seeds and strings. Place the halves in a pan, shell side up. Bake in a 325 °F oven for one hour or more until the flesh becomes tender and begins to fall apart. Scrape the pumpkin or squash from the shell and put through a ricer or food processor to form a smooth consistency. The pulp may be frozen for use later, but the pureed pulp cannot be safely canned.

CANNING PUMPKIN AND WINTER SQUASH (CUBED)

Quantity: An average of 16 pounds is needed per canner load of 7 quarts; an average of 10 pounds is needed per canner load of 9 pints, an average of 2¼ pounds per quart.

Quality: Pumpkins and squash should have a hard rind and stringless, mature pulp of ideal quality for cooking fresh. Small pumpkins (sugar or pie varieties) make better products. NOTE: Because it will not stay cubed on heating, spaghetti squash should be frozen instead of canned.

Procedure: Wash, remove seeds, cut into 1 inch- wide slices, and peel. Cut flesh into 1 inch cubes. Boil two minutes in water. CAUTION: Do not mash or puree. Fill jars with cubes and cooking liquid, leaving 1-inch headspace. Adjust lids. Process in a dial-gauge pressure canner at 11 pounds pressure OR in a weighted-gauge pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure (15 pounds if above 1000 ft. altitude):

Pints	55 minutes
Quarts	90 minutes

For making pies, drain jars and strain or sieve cubes.

FREEZING

Preparation: Select firm, mature produce with a hard rind. Wash, cut into cooking-size sections and remove seeds. Cook until soft in boiling water, in steam in a pressure cooker or in an oven. Remove pulp from rind and mash. To cool, place pan with pumpkin or squash in cold water and stir occasionally. Package, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze. NOTE: For spaghetti squash, mashing the cooked pulp is not necessary.

DRYING AND ROASTING SEEDS

Drying seeds and roasting seeds are two different processes. To dry, carefully wash pumpkin or squash seeds to remove the clinging fibrous tissue. Seeds can be dried in the sun, in a dehydrator at 115 to 120 °F for 1 to 2 hours, or in an oven on warm for 3 to 4 hours. Stir them frequently to avoid scorching.

To roast, take dried seeds, toss with oil and/or salt and roast in a preheated oven at 250 °F for 10 to 15 minutes.

For more information on home canning, contact your local Extension agent.

Sources:

1. USDA (1994). *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539.
2. Reynolds, Susan and Paulette Williams. *So Easy To Preserve*. University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service. Revised by Judy Harrison, 1993.

This information has been reviewed and adapted for use in South Carolina by P.H. Schmutz, HGIC Information Specialist, and E.H. Hoyle, Extension Food Safety Specialist, Clemson University.

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