

Fall flavor

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

The names of some foods sound enticing. Croissant, filet mignon, honey crisp.

Squash, however never made anyone's heart flutter.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of squash. Summer squash with their thin, edible skins that are easy to prep and quick to cook. And winter squash, with usually tougher, inedible exterior skins that allow them to survive lower temperatures.

I love all squash equally. Although I briefly broke up with acorn squash after preparing one resulted in a trip to the Urgent Care and five stitches.

While I don't mind a long roast in the oven for a winter squash, peeling them can feel onerous when I want an unfussy dinner. Perhaps this is underlying trauma from the acorn squash incident. I wonder if there are food-injury mental health therapists out there; I should find one.

Thinned skinned squash result in quick and simple meal prep, so let me introduce the love of my winter squash life, delicata. I almost want to sing its name out; it's that kind of vegetable.

Delicata squash are cylindrical in shape, with a thin yellow and green striped skin. They can also come in a squat (flat-bottomed) and round shape, called a sweet dumpling (I'm not making this up!). Delicata squash will keep for a few weeks and the skins are edible.



Brian Medford

Author Brian Medford roasts and seasons delicata squash to use in salads, side dishes or as a snack.

My go-to way to cook delicata is oven roasting, which caramelizes the sugars, and results in a sweet tasting squash with a slightly burnished exterior and a creamy interior. You can roast the seeds as well.

Delicata squash is gloriously versatile and pairs well with sweet or savory spices.

I enjoy serving roasted delicata on top of a kale salad, as a dinner side dish or as a crunchy snack. Being thin skinned never tasted so good.

Roasted Delicata Squash

Serves 2 to 4.

This is my standard recipe that can be easily embellished with your favorite aromatics and accompaniments

- 3 medium delicata squash (about 3 pounds), scrubbed clean
- 2 to 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 heaping teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- Sprinkle of red pepper flakes or Aleppo pepper (optional)
- Flaky sea salt, for sprinkling

Directions

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.

Trim the ends of the squash. Cut in half lengthwise and scoop the seeds out. Cut each half into 1/3-inch-thick half-moons and transfer to a baking sheet lined with aluminum foil or parchment paper.

Drizzle the squash with the olive oil. Add the kosher salt, black pepper and red pepper flakes (optional) and toss together so the squash is evenly coated.

Roast in the oven, tossing the squash on the baking sheet about halfway through, until the squash is tender and slightly burnished on the outside, about 25 to 30 minutes.

Sprinkle with flaky salt and serve.

Possible embellishments

Add 3 to 4 sprigs of rosemary or thyme to the sheet pan and toss before roasting.

Omit the red pepper flakes and add brown sugar and toss before roasting.

Sprinkle the roasted squash with parmesan, roasted pumpkin seeds or za'atar.

Drizzle the roasted squash with maple syrup or a finishing oil.

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