Indigenous Food Hubs
2025 Harvest of the Month

OCTOBER: SQUASH

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Squash have been important to many tribes for hundreds of years. They weren't just food – they were part of celebrations, special ceremonies, and family or clan traditions. In some communities, squash represent family connections and a close relationship with the land. Growing and sharing squash is a way to honor the past and keep culture alive today.

MAKE A GOURD RATTLE

Materials:
- Body: Cardboard tube, plastic bottle, or paper mâché
- Rattle filler: Buttons, dried beans, uncooked rice, or pebbles
- Decorations: Markers, paint, fabric, feathers, beads, etc.!

Steps:
1. Build the Gourd: Use your chosen container as the base.
2. Add the Sound: Put a handful of your rattle filler inside.
3. Seal It Up: Tape, glue, or close tightly so nothing spills.
4. Decorate: Add colors, patterns, or meaningful symbols.
5. Shake and Play: Try different rhythms and hear your unique sound!

NUTRITION AND FUN FACTS

- Winter squash (butternut, acorn) is nature's multivitamin!
- There are two kinds of squash, winter squash (acorn, butternut, and gourds) and summer squash (zucchini, yellow squash).
- The name "squash" is shortened from the Algonquian term "askutasquash" meaning "to be eaten green."
- Ancient varieties of squash in the Americas date back 12,000 years.
- Among tribes, some clan systems are represented by squash.
- Squash, gourds, and pumpkins are part of the same plant family.
- Winter squashes are generally more nutrient-dense and calorie-rich than summer varieties - which aligns perfectly with how Native American communities traditionally used them as winter food stores.
- One cup = 80-100 calories and more than 200% of daily vitamin A
- Excellent source of vitamin C, potassium, and fiber for your heart, and digestive and immune systems.

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WILD RICE & SAUSAGE STUFFED ACORN SQUASH

PREP AND COOK TIME: 1 HR 45 MINS   **SERVINGS: 4**

INGREDIENTS

For the Squash:
- 2 large acorn squash, halved & seeded
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tbsp olive oil or melted butter
- Salt & black pepper, to taste

For the Stuffing:
- 1 cup wild rice, rinsed
- 2½ cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 lb ground bison or elk sausage
- 1 large onion and 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts or chopped walnuts
- 2 tbsp fresh sage (or 1 tbsp dried)
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme (or 1 tsp dried)
- 1 tsp ground sumac (or lemon zest)
- ½ tsp ground juniper berries (or rosemary)
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- ¼ tsp ground allspice
- Salt & pepper, to taste
- 2–3 tbsp olive oil (for cooking)

Optional Garnish:
- Fresh herbs, toasted nuts, and a drizzle of maple syrup.

DIRECTIONS

Prep Squash (15 min):
Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Halve squash lengthwise, scoop out seeds, and score flesh in a crosshatch pattern (¼" deep). Brush with olive oil and maple syrup; season with salt and pepper. Place cut-side down on a parchment-lined baking sheet.

Cook Wild Rice (45 min):
Bring broth to a boil in a saucepan. Add wild rice, reduce to low, cover, and simmer 40–45 min until tender. Drain excess liquid.

Make Stuffing (20 min):
Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high. Brown bison/elk sausage (6–8 min). Add onion and celery; cook 5 min. Stir in garlic (1 min), then add cooked rice, cranberries, and toasted nuts. Season with sage, thyme, sumac, juniper (or rosemary), smoked paprika, allspice, salt, and pepper. Cook 2–3 min to blend flavors. Adjust seasoning.

Roast & Assemble:
Bake squash cut-side down for 35–40 min until fork-tender. Flip, fill with stuffing, and return to oven for 15–20 min until heated through and golden on top. Let rest 5 min.

SQUASH IN THE KITCHEN

- Leaves from squash plants could be used to steam/cook foods.
- Haudenosaunee used the squash blossoms to flavor stock for cooking.
- The Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) claimed the blossoms to be a broth thickener.

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