

Spaghetti Squash

Raw spaghetti squash has a solid flesh, similar to other squash. When cooked, the meat resembles strands of spaghetti, which are sometimes as long as traditional spaghetti noodles. Though it is very mild, bordering on bland, it absorbs the flavor of what it is prepared with quite well.

Spaghetti squash is a great low calorie, low-carb (and gluten-free!) alternative to wheat-flour spaghetti. It provides a significant source of nutrients such as folic acid, potassium, vitamin A, and beta carotene.

CULINARY TIPS

- Cut the squash in half lengthwise and cook face down in a baking dish. Add a little water to the pan or cover with foil to keep it from drying out. Scoop it out
- Roast it whole at 400°F, until a fork or knife can pierce through the outer layer easily.
- Keep the seeds and roast them! After removing the flesh from the seeds in water, toss them in olive oil and salt, then roast at 300°F until just starting to brown.

HOW TO STORE

Spaghetti squash does not store as well as other winter squash varieties. In the most ideal conditions – a cool, dry place (55-60°F) – it can store for 2.5 months.

Cooked spaghetti squash can be stored in the fridge for up to a week, or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

3 WAYS TO PREPARE

- Bake, then top with homemade tomato sauce.
- After roasting, scoop out the flesh. Add diced tomatoes, black beans, chili powder, cumin, and salt, then toss until combined. Fill the squash halves with the filling then bake for 15-20 more minutes.
- Make stuffed squash! Try it with Italian sausage, onions, garlic, herbs, eggplant, peppers, tomato or any other veggies that you like.

LASAGNA-STUFFED SPAGHETTI SQUASH

Makes 4 very generous servings

2 medium spaghetti squash (about 5 pounds total)
1 teaspoon olive oil
1 medium yellow onion, diced
2 to 3 cloves garlic, minced
1 pound lean ground beef
1 1/2 teaspoons salt, divided
1 (15-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
2 cups whole or 2% ricotta cheese
1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley leaves
1 cup shredded mozzarella
Chopped fresh parsley or basil leaves, for garnish

Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat to 400°F. Cut the squashes in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Lay them cut-side down in a roasting pan or other baking dish, and add about an inch of water. Roast until completely tender soft when poked with a fork, 45 to 60 minutes. Transfer to a cooling rack until cool enough to handle.

While the squash is roasting, heat the olive oil in a high-sided skillet or saucepan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the onions and cook until translucent, 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the beef and 1 teaspoon of salt. Cook until well-browned, breaking up the beef into small crumbles, 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in the crushed tomatoes and bring to a simmer. Continue simmering the sauce until the squashes are ready, 5 to 20 minutes. Taste and add more salt if needed.

Use a fork to shred the inside of the each squash, leaving about a half-inch of squash left in the shell. Mix the shredded squash into the tomato sauce. In a separate bowl, mix together the ricotta cheese, parsley, and 1/2 teaspoon of salt.

Wipe out the roasting pan and arrange the squash shells inside like bowls. Spoon 1/4 cup of the ricotta mixture into each shell and spread evenly over the bottoms. Spoon half of the tomato-squash mixture over the ricotta and spread into an even layer. Top with the remaining ricotta and tomato sauce, using up the rest of both.

→ At this point, the shells can be covered and refrigerated for up to 24 hours. Add an extra 10 minutes to the cooking time.

Bake for 15 minutes at 400°F. Sprinkle the mozzarella over the tops of the squashes and bake until the cheese is bubbly and browned in spots, 15 to 20 minutes more. (For a more golden top, run the squashes under the broiler for a minute or two.) Sprinkle parsley or basil over the tops and serve immediately.

Source: www.thekitchn.com