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Winter squash comes in a wide variety of shapes and colors. They ripen and are harvested about the time the summer squash peters out. With their hard shells, creamy texture and sweet flavor, winter squash are as different from summer squash as.... Winter is from summer.

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The first cool days of autumn are upon us, and the daytime is shorter than the night. Roasted butternuts become a staple food on the farm. In soups, pies, or simply buttered, they warm us from the inside.

Butternuts are the tan, pear-shaped squash that store the best. We often have a few around the next summer, and I've kept them for over two years. Fairy is a similar variety that is rounder and is decorated with tan and green splotches. The flesh has a darker orange color.

Acorns are the deep green ones which are shaped like.... Acorns. The flesh is lighter, almost yellow in color, and very sweet. We grow a similar one called Festival that is quite festive in color, with bright orange and white spots alternating with shades of green.

Another couple of varieties who resemble each other are Pelicatta and Sweet Dumpling. They are smaller, sugary sweet and have a bright yellow flesh. They don't store very well so eat them up right away. The Pelicattas are oblong and yellow striped, and the Sweet Dumplings are cup shaped and have green stripes.

The next two are in a different squash family called Maxima. Bon Bon is a buttercup variety, with the characteristic button on the bottom like a turban squash. Sunshine is a Kubocha squash that is bright orange. These two have a deep orange flesh, heavier, and with a rich flavor. They are not stringy but have a smooth texture.

Winter Squash

Tuesday, October 5, 2010

For a stringy one we have the yellow spaghetti squash. It comes out in long strands which are served with spaghetti squash. They are not very sweet.

All of these are grown the same way, into well-composted , well-tilled soil we lay off rows 3 ½ feet wide and drop a few seeds every foot. The rows are covered, cultivated and hoed a few times, and soon the vines have the field.

Pruning shears snip the fruit from the vine. We are careful putting in the bushel baskets, laying the hard stems so they don't poke a hole in the other squashes. Any ones that develop a bad spot are sent to Nashville Directly, and if they go too far the pigs and cows get a treat.

I bake them whole, for about an hour at 375°. Then I scoop out the seeds, and scoop out the flesh from the rind. Liberal amounts of butter mixed in prepare it for the table, where it quickly disappears. No matter what color or shape you like, winter squash has it, and you know fall is here when you can smell them roasting in the oven.