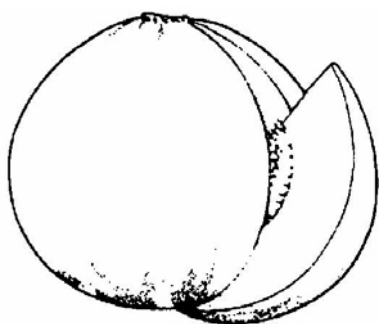


South Florida Tropicals: Calabaza¹

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Background

Sometimes referred to as West Indian pumpkin or green pumpkin, calabaza (*Cucurbita moschata*) belongs to the squash family. Calabaza is grown throughout the tropics and

sub-tropics. This large, pumpkin-like winter squash grows on long, trailing vines.

Availability

Available year-round.

Storage

Whole calabaza will keep for approximately one month at room temperature in a well ventilated spot. Cut calabaza, covered tightly with plastic, should stay fresh in the refrigerator for a week. Clean knives and containers must be used for preparation and storage. Cooked, pureed calabaza packed tightly in airtight containers will keep in the freezer for up to one year.

1. This document is Fact Sheet FCS 8518, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: July 2004. First published as SS-HEC-8, May 1993. Revised: August 2007. Reviewed November 2010. Please visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>
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Uses

The bright orange thick flesh can substitute for pumpkin and other winter squash varieties. Calabaza generally cooks more quickly and is less watery than pumpkin. Calabaza is best when well-seasoned and mixed with other ingredients. It can be pureed and seasoned or used as an ingredient in other dishes such as soups, stews, pies, and custards.

Yield

1 to 12 lbs = 3 servings.
One lb = 1 1/2 to 2 cups cooked mashed squash.

Nutritive Value

An extremely good source of vitamin A (5460 IU), 2 cup of calabaza contains the following nutrients:

- 35 calories
- 8 grams carbohydrate
- 1 gram protein
- trace fat
- 246 milligrams of potassium
- 15 milligrams of vitamin C

Food Safety During Preparation

- Wash hands with hot soapy water before and after:
 - ◆ handling fresh produce
 - ◆ handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood
 - ◆ using the bathroom
 - ◆ changing diapers
 - ◆ handling pets
- Wash fresh calabaza with cool tap water just before preparing or eating.
Don't use soap or detergents.

- Cut away bruised or damaged areas before preparing or eating.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops often. Use hot soapy water and rinse well. **Sanitize** them after contact with fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

To Sanitize
Mix one teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach in one quart of water.
Pour the mixture onto the surface and let sit at least one minute.
Rinse well with hot running water.

- Don't cross contaminate. Use clean cutting boards and utensils for fresh produce. If you can, use a separate cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Do not consume ice that has come in contact with fresh produce or other raw products.
- Use a cooler with ice or gel packs when taking perishable food outdoors. This includes cut fresh fruits and vegetables.

Following these steps will help reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

Basic Preparation Tips

Cut calabaza into fairly large, uniform chunks. Scrape out seeds and spongy fibers. Set on a steamer rack over boiling water. Cover and steam until tender, approximately 20 minutes. Cool briefly and peel. Process in a food processor, or mash by hand. Cover and refrigerate or freeze.

Other Methods

Peel calabaza and boil in water for approximately 30 minutes until tender, or microwave in a small amount of water until tender.

Toasting Seeds

Boil 2 cups of calabaza seeds in 1 quart of water with 2 tablespoons salt until somewhat tender -- approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Drain, toss with a tablespoon of corn or olive oil, and spread on a pan. Bake at 350°F until golden and crisp, approximately 30 minutes, tossing often.

Using Calabaza

Tropicals vary in natural pectin, acid, and sugar content from one season to another due to the variations of the climate.

Calabaza with Garlic Lime Marinade

1 ½ lbs calabaza
½ cup lime or lemon juice
6 Tablespoons olive oil
5 cloves garlic

Peel and cube the calabaza, removing the seeds and stringy center. Boil in salted water until tender; drain well. Peel and mash garlic cloves. Heat oil in skillet and add garlic. Cook slowly for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the lime juice. Place calabaza on a platter and pour marinade over all the pieces. Allow to steep at least 5 minutes before serving. Serves 3 to 4.

Calabaza Orange Bake

2 cups cooked, mashed calabaza
(see Basic Preparation Tips)
4 whole oranges hollowed and seeded,
saving flesh, juice, and rind

Slice the tops off the oranges and hollow out to form a container for the calabaza mixture. Level off the base of the oranges so that they will stand upright. Reserve some orange juice, flesh, and rind. (Additional flesh and orange juice may be used in a fruit salad.)

Combine with calabaza:

2 Tablespoons margarine
2 Tablespoons brown sugar
(plus additional if desired, for topping) 1
teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons grated orange rind
1/3 cup orange juice
½ cup fresh orange flesh, chopped
Chopped nuts, if desired for topping

Preheat oven to 375°F. Fill hollowed orange shells with the seasoned calabaza-orange mixture. Place in a baking dish. Sprinkle with additional brown sugar, and ¼ cup chopped nuts, if desired. Cover dish and bake 20 to 30 minutes. Remove cover and bake until brown, approximately 15 minutes more. Serves 4.

Calabaza Pea Soup*

1 ½ cups of green split peas
or 1 ½ cups green pigeon peas
4 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1 dried hot pepper
1 bay leaf
2 cups cooked calabaza pulp
(see Basic Preparation Tips)

If using dry split peas, rinse then soak in hot water for 2 hours; drain and proceed with recipe. Pigeon peas do not require soaking. Combine all ingredients in a large kettle and cook over low heat until peas are tender: 1 hour for pigeon peas, 2 ½ to 3 hours for the dry split peas. Serves 6.

Calabaza Pancakes*

- 1 small calabaza
- 1 ½ cups pancake mix
- ¼ cup wheat germ
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon **each:** ground cinnamon, nutmeg,
and ginger
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 ½ cups low-fat (1%) milk
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

Wash calabaza, cut in sections and remove seeds. Place in boiling, salted water, and cook until tender. Drain, remove skin, and mash. Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Drop by spoonfuls onto a greased griddle. When mixture bubbles, turn the pancake over with a spatula. Serve plain or with powdered sugar or syrup. Serves 4 to 6.

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