

PATTY PAN SQUASH



In Yuma County, patty pan squash is a rather minor crop, with less than 20 acres in production. The squash are planted in early March, ready for harvest starting in early May.

Brightly colored, this little squash comes in numerous varieties: white, bright yellow or orange, and ends in a thick green tail. The patty pan is about the size of a pepper, semi-spherical in shape with a scalloped border.

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Patty pans are a light green when young but shade toward white when mature. Their shape has been compared to that of a flying saucer. They can be found in most grocery stores in the area, typically from summer into early autumn. Choose the smallest ones available if you want the best taste and texture. If you handle them carefully, you can store them in the fridge for up to 6 days.

Patty pan squash is a great source of vitamins C and A, as well as folic acid. A cupful of this squash has less than 30 calories.

Patty pan squash, also called Sunburst Squash, White squash, Scallopini and Button Squash, is a summer squash (*Cucurbita pepo*) notable for its small size, round and shallow shape, and scalloped edges, somewhat resembling a small toy top, or flying saucer. The name "patty pan" derives from "a pan for baking a patty." Its French name, "pâtisson," derives from a Provençal word for a cake made in a scalloped mould.

Patty pans come in yellow, green, and white varieties. The squash is most tender when relatively immature; it is generally served when it is no more than two to three inches in diameter. In fine cuisine, its tender flesh is sometimes scooped out and mixed with flavorings such as garlic prior to reinsertion; the scooped-out husk of a patty pan also is sometimes used as a decorative container for other foods. Patty pan is a good source of magnesium, niacin, and vitamins A and C. One cup contains approximately 20 to 30 calories and no fat. It is often sliced, coated and fried until golden brown.

Patty pan squash is a type of summer squash with a distinctive disclike shape. At a glance, patty pan squash looks sort of like a UFO or a child's top, with a flat center and deeply scalloped edges, and this squash tends to attract some attention in the produce department thanks to its unusual shape. The flavor of patty pan squash is similar to that of other summer squashes such as zucchini, and it can be used in a wide assortment of recipes.

You may also hear patty pan squash referred to as scalloped squash. These common names reference the idea that the squash looks sort of like the scalloped molds used to make some fancy desserts. The best patty pan squash is small, generally no larger than the width of a palm in diameter, with a bright, even color.

Depending on the cultivar, patty squash may be green, white, or yellow. The more mature the squash is, the deeper the color and the thicker the rind. Young squashes have rinds which are so tender that they can be eaten along with the rest of the squash, while older squashes generally need to be peeled for use. A squash which is too large will be woody, hard, and tasteless, which is something that should be kept in mind at the grocery store. Good squash will be uniformly textured, with no signs of mold or discolored spots.

These squash are small enough to be cooked whole, and they can be steamed, boiled, or baked after they have been poked to release any pressure which might build up during the cooking process. Patty pan squash can also be halved, stuffed, and baked or broiled, and it may be used chopped in an assortment of dishes where squash might be desirable.

Patty pan squash are very large, bushy plants. The fruit is harvested when they are immature and have soft skins. Their Fruit can be stored for about 1 to 2 weeks.

Patty Pan is round and flattened like a plate with scalloped edges, white, yellow or green in color.

Squashes are one of the oldest known crops--10,000 years by some estimates of sites in Mexico. Since squashes are gourds, they most likely served as containers or utensils because of their hard shells. The seeds and flesh later became an important part of the pre-Columbian Indian diet in both South and North America.

Native American tribes grew pumpkins, yellow crooknecks, patty pans, and turbans. Native Americans roasted or boiled the squashes and pumpkins and preserved the flesh as conserves in syrup. They also ate the young shoots, leaves, flowers, and seeds.

"Squash" comes from the Narragansett Native American word askutasquash, which means "eaten

raw or uncooked." And why is the game also called squash? It used to be called "Rackets" and a "squashy" soft ball constructed of thin rubber was used. It had a number of holes that caused the ball to collapse when hit hard.

Squash are fleshy vegetables protected by a hard rind. They belong to the plant family that includes melons and cucumbers. Among substances present in summer squash are these two phytochemicals, coumarins and flavonoids. The skin and rind of summer squash are rich in the nutrient beta-carotene, but the fleshy portion of this vegetable is not. To gain the full nutritional benefits of this vegetable, the skins or rinds must be eaten.

Squash has been a staple for the Native Americans for more than 5000 years, and was a mainstay for early European who settled in America. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were enthusiastic squash growers. In the nineteenth century, merchant seamen returned from other parts of the Americas with many new varieties. This resulted in the various colors, shapes, and sizes that are available today.

Fruit may be harvested at a very immature stage, at the desired fruit size, before seeds begin to enlarge and harden. A thin, soft external rind and external glossiness are also indicators of a pre-maturity condition. The entire fruit is edible, either raw or cooked, without removal of seeds and seed cavity tissue. Small, young fruit are tender and generally have a slightly sweet taste.

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