

Seasonal Eating
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Spaghetti Squash: Beyond a Pasta Substitute
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Summer calls for light, refreshing meals and for me, shrimp fits that bill perfectly. Shrimp is my favorite seafood and its mild flavor takes so well to strong marinades, rubs and sauces. So when I saw spaghetti squash at the Bedford Farmer's Market last week, my first thought was shrimp.

Spaghetti squash has gotten a bad rap in my book. So many people think of it as just a diet substitute for pasta and cover it up with red tomato sauce. But this squash has such a sweet and delicate flavor on its own that it is a shame to cover it all up. Spaghetti squash is a great side dish with just a little butter, salt and pepper. But sometimes I like to accent that sweet flavor and delicate texture with savory additions, like peas and mushrooms or top it with a spicy grilled or sautéed protein for a light, summery main dish.



There are several ways to cook a spaghetti squash. You can boil or steam or microwave it but my favorite way is to roast the squash. I cut the stem end off and then cut it in half lengthwise. Scrape out the seeds and loose fibers inside like a pumpkin. Sprinkle the insides with a little kosher salt and place them cut sides down on a baking sheet (I usually line mine with a silicone mat or parchment paper). Pierce the outside with a knife so that the steam can escape and then bake at 350 degrees until it is tender – usually about 45-60 minutes for a medium sized squash. When it is cooled, use a fork to scrape down the length of the flesh on the inside and it will separate into short strands – I don't usually get long spaghetti length strands. Now you are ready to use the squash however you wish.

I made this Curried Shrimp with Spaghetti Squash for dinner the other night and it was just the right combination of spicy shrimp with the cool sweetness of the spaghetti squash. The shrimp is marinated in a mixture of curry powder, cumin, cayenne, garlic, ginger root, soy sauce and just a little oil for an exotic Indian flavor with just a little kick. For a complete meal, add some bread and a fruit salad with blueberries and blackberries from the farmer's market. If you're not a shrimp fan, just substitute some cubes or slices of boneless chicken breast.

So pick up a spaghetti squash this summer and try a new side or main dish to add to your recipe rotation. You're sure to fall in love with this sweet and refreshing but underutilized vegetable!

Check out the UT Extension Seasonal Eating Blog (<https://extension.tennessee.edu/Bedford/seasonaleatingblog/default.aspx>) for recipes using local farmer's market produce. The Seasonal Eating Cook-

ing Demonstration on “Garden Delights” will be held on July 16 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$7.00 to class to cover the samples.

Curried Shrimp with Spaghetti Squash

1 medium spaghetti squash
Kosher salt
1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic
1 tablespoon minced, peeled fresh ginger root
1 tablespoon low sodium soy sauce
4 teaspoons curry powder
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/8 teaspoon ground cumin
2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
20 large, peeled and deveined shrimp
1 cup chicken broth
1/2 teaspoon low sodium soy sauce
4 teaspoons white wine

In a plastic zip top bag combine garlic, ginger, soy sauce, curry powder, cayenne, cumin and 1 tablespoon of the oil. Add the shrimp and squeeze to coat with the marinade. Squeeze all of the air out of the bag, seal and refrigerate for 1 hour. Cut the stem off the spaghetti squash. Cut in half lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds and inner fibers with a metal spoon. Sprinkle insides of squash halves with a little kosher salt. Place cut side down on a silpat or parchment lined baking sheet and pierce skin with a knife several times to let steam out. Bake at 350 degrees for about 45 –60 minutes or until the skin can be pierced easily with a knife. Let cool. When cool enough to handle, use a fork to scrape down the inside of the squash halves to release the strands of flesh into a bowl. Heat remaining tablespoon of oil in a large skillet. Add shrimp and spread into a single layer. Cook for 30 seconds and then turn over and cook until just opaque. Remove with a slotted spoon to a bowl. Add the squash to the pan and stir to coat with remaining oil in the pan. Add the chicken broth, soy sauce and wine. Cook over high heat until most of the liquid is evaporated, stirring frequently. Spoon squash onto four plates and top with shrimp.