

Seasonal Eating
Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Fall Squash Makes a Tasty Main Dish
November 2019

Acorn squash are always fun in the fall. They are the perfect little individual bowl when cut in half. My Mom will put some cinnamon, a little brown sugar and butter in the middle and roast it for a great side dish to pork. The sweetness of the squash pairs well with the flavor of pork.

But acorn squash is good for a main dish as well. This week I took acorn squash and stuffed it with a mixture of wild rice, sausage, pecans and cranberries for a great fall night dinner.

Make sure you wash the outside of your acorn squash with lots of running water and a vegetable brush before cutting. Use a large chef's knife to cut the squash in half lengthwise which makes a nice little "bowl" after the seeds are scraped out. The best tool for this is a metal teaspoon which scrapes out all of the fibers really well. While the squash bakes, you make the filling.

Start with the rice since it will take a while to cook, 45-50 minutes. I love wild rice. It has a nutty flavor and chewy texture. Wild rice on its own can be a little hard to find since it more often is packaged with a mixture of long grain rice. Look for little boxes of just the wild rice or some larger more specialty grocery stores carry bags of the rice. If you can't find it, you can substitute the long grain and wild rice mixture but don't use the seasoning packet and you won't need the whole box. You could also use a brown rice which has a little more chewy texture like the wild rice.

Then it's on to sausage, vegetables and seasonings to round out the filling along with some toasted pecans for crunch and dried cranberries for sweetness. While this sounds like a lot, everything cooks at the same time and it makes the house smell incredible.

So this fall, try taking squash out of the side dish category and filling it up for a hearty and flavorful main dish.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating (bedford.tennessee.edu).

Wild Rice and Sausage Stuffed Acorn Squash

- 1/4 cup wild rice
- 2/3 cup water
- Pinch kosher salt
- 2 acorn squash
- Cooking spray
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 1/4 pound sausage
- 1/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- 4 ounces mushrooms, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley



1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 cup toasted chopped pecans
1/4 cup dried cranberries

Combine rice, water and a pinch of salt in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover and cook for 45-50 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered for 10 minutes before fluffing with a fork. Meanwhile, wash acorn squash and cut in half lengthwise. Scrape out the seeds and fiber. Spray cut sides with cooking spray and sprinkle with a little salt and pepper. Place cut side down on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake at 425 degrees F. for 20-30 minutes or just until barely tender. In a medium sauté pan, cook the sausage, onion, celery and mushrooms until sausage is no longer pink and the vegetables are cooked down and tender. Add the garlic powder, salt, pepper, parsley and thyme during the last few minutes of cooking. Stir in the pecans, cranberries and the wild rice. Spoon the mixture into the acorn squash halves and return to the oven for 5-10 minutes, until everything is hot and edges of the squash are lightly browned and tender.