

Extension

Seasonal Eating Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Fall Comfort
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The cooler days bring to the table comfort foods. Warm, hearty dishes that stick to your ribs. Last Saturday, I spent the morning at the Murfreesboro farmers' market on the square. Winter squashes, root vegetables, apples and greens flooded the market – all the fall favorites.

Winter squashes are a great addition to the menu. Butternut, acorn, delicata, hubbard and pumpkins are just some of the commonly available squashes out of the many, many varieties. These can be cut open and then roasted, steamed, boiled or sautéed. My favorite method is roasting the squash with a little maple syrup or molasses. You can peel and cube it first or just cut it open into halves and scoop out the seeds and bake it in halves. Another way to enjoy the squash is to mash it like mashed potatoes and add some syrup or cinnamon and a little butter. The plain mashed squash can be used in quick breads. Use your favorite pumpkin bread recipe and substitute whatever squash you have. If it is a little watery, press out some of the liquid with a paper towel or drain it in cheesecloth. Do note that the pumpkins we use for carving are not the best flavored, so if you are going to cook with pumpkins choose a smaller pie variety.

So as I picked up a butternut squash at the market, I thought about a hearty pork stew. I love beef stew in the winter with white potatoes and chunks of onion and beef. So for my pork stew I used carrots and onions with chunks of butternut squash and cubes of pork shoulder. The sweetness of the squash goes well with the pork. The pork shoulder which is well-marbled with connective tissue, cooks down into fall apart tender cubes with long slow cooking. The onion, carrot, black beans and pork all simmer until tender in a flavorful liquid and then the squash is added along with fluffy dumplings to finish it off. It only takes about 20 minutes for the cubes of squash to cook so you don't want to add them too soon or they will turn to mush.

So enjoy some comfort foods with winter squashes this fall and warm up the table with a hearty meal.

Check out the UT Extension Seasonal Eating Blog (<https://extension.tennessee.edu/Bedford/seasonaleatingblog/default.aspx>) for recipes using local farmers' market produce. The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on "End of the Harvest" will be held on October 15 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.



Pork Stew

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 pounds bone-in pork shoulder steaks trimmed and cut into 1/2" cubes
Salt
Black pepper
1 large carrot, chopped
1 onion, chopped
6 cups chicken broth
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flake
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
2 bay leaves
1/2 cup black beans
2 cups peeled and cubed butternut squash
1/4 cup flour
1/2 cup water
1 cup biscuit mix
1/3 cup milk

Heat the oil in a Dutch oven. Sprinkle pork cubes with salt and pepper. Add the pork cubes to the oil and brown on all sides. Remove the pork to a bowl and add the carrot and onion to the pot. Sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the pork cubes back to the pot with chicken broth, oregano, thyme, red pepper flakes, cumin, bay leaves and black beans. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer, cover and cook for about 2 hours, stirring occasionally until the beans are just tender. Add the butternut squash. In a small bowl whisk the flour and water together and stir into pot. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Combine biscuit mix and milk. Drop by spoonfuls on top of the stew, about 5 dumplings. Simmer for 10 minutes and then cover and simmer another 10 minutes. The squash and beans should be tender and the dumplings cooked through. Adjust salt and pepper, remove bay leaves and serve in a bowl topped with a dumpling.