

Seasonal Eating
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Squashes and Roots for Fall
October 2018

When I think of fall (and I think we're finally starting to get some fall weather here), it conjures up foods that are hearty and roasted until browned on the outside with warm flavors like cinnamon or maple. For me that means butternut squash and root vegetables like beets.

Butternut squash is probably my favorite of the winter squashes. It is super sweet and can be mashed into a puree or will hold its shape in cubes or slices. So it's good for everything from soups and breads to side dishes and salads.

To pair with the sweet squash I chose beets which are another of my favorites in the roots category. The earthy flavor pairs well with the sweetness of the squash and of course the color is beautiful. You can roast the beets before peeling and then peel and chop or you can peel and chop them and then cook. I prefer the latter as I don't have to handle them when hot. Be sure to wear gloves or wash your hands immediately after handling to avoid staining. Just a little oil, salt and pepper and then roast at 400 degrees.



Both of these roasted vegetables are great just on their own but I combined them and dressed them with a maple vinaigrette using some of the drippings from fried bacon to go on top. Now you can't go wrong with bacon on anything. Add some crunchy walnuts and chewy dried cranberries for a colorful and tasty side dish that would pair perfectly with pork chops or baked chicken. You could also let them cool to room temperature and sprinkle over greens for a tasty salad.

Give the fall squashes and root vegetables a turn in your kitchen for wonderfully tasty and filling dishes as the weather turns cooler. Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating (bedford.tennessee.edu).

Butternut Squash and Beets with Warm Maple Vinaigrette

1 butternut squash
4 medium sized beets
Vegetable oil
Kosher salt
Black pepper

4 slices bacon, chopped
1/4 cup maple syrup
1/2 teaspoon whole grain mustard
1/4 cup dried cranberries
1/4 cup toasted, chopped walnuts

Cut the squash in half crosswise, stand up on the flat cuts and peel the outside. Cut the neck into 1/2" cubes. Cut the bulbous part in half and scoop out the seeds and pulp. Cut the flesh into 1/2" cubes. Peel the beets and cut up into 1/2" cubes. Place the squash cubes on a piece of foil on a baking sheet and place the beets on another piece of foil on a baking sheet, all in a single layer. Toss with a little vegetable oil and a sprinkle of salt and pepper on both. Bake at 400 degrees until tender, about 30 minutes for the squash and 45 for the beets. Meanwhile, cook the bacon until crispy and remove to a paper towel to drain. Remove all but 2 tablespoons of the drippings from the skillet. Add 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil with the maple syrup, mustard and a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Stir together. When the vegetables are done, toss with the dressing and stir in the cranberries, walnuts and reserved bacon. Serve warm.