



Summer Squash Information Sheet

Purchasing Specifications

Specifications should state grade, type, size, and quantity. Select an appropriate grade for the intended use. Squash should have well defined color for variety, feel heavy for its size, and skin should be fully intact with very little discoloration. No more than 10% should have defects that make the squash unusable, and no more than 1% should be affected by decay.

Identification

Summer squash is harvested when tender and still immature. The skin is very soft and seeds and skin are typically edible if squash is not over mature. They are usually separated into straight or crookneck varieties, with patty pan, zucchini, and yellow crook neck the most popular. Winter type squash has similar requirements as summer type but are very different in appearance and typical use. Winter squash typically has hard outer skin and inedible seeds.

U.S. Grades

- U.S. No. 1* - Requires younger and more tender squash than the U.S. No. 2.
- U.S. No. 2 - Permitted to be more mature and allows greater surface area to be affected by defects.

*U.S. No. 1 consists of squash of one variety or similar varietal characteristics, with stems or portions of stems attached. Squash is fairly young and tender, fairly well formed, and firm. It is free from decay and breakdown, and from damage caused by discoloration, cuts, bruises and scars, freezing, dirt or other foreign material, disease, insects, or mechanical or other means.

Domestic Harvest

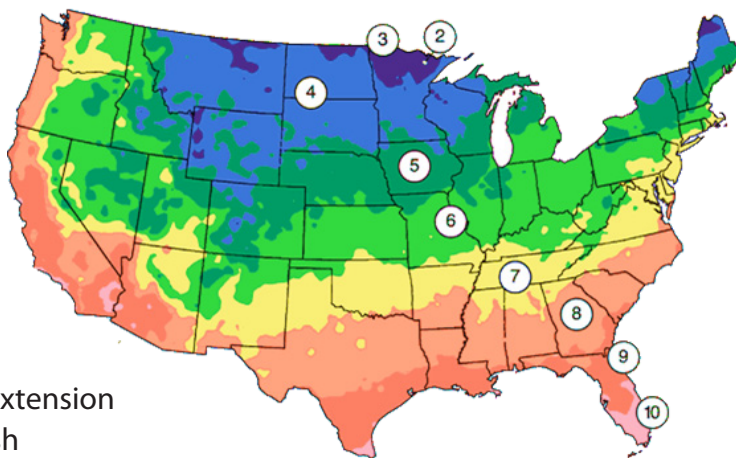
2, 3, 4: July -September

5, 6, 7: June - August

7: June - September

8: May - September

9,10: October - June



Check with your county or state Cooperative Extension Office for specific information regarding squash production in your area.



Summer Squash

Information Sheet, continued

Receiving Guidelines

Desirable Characteristics



- Acceptable color and shape.
- All varieties of squash should be firm to touch.

Product Defects



Bruise



Discoloration



Sunken/Discolored



Scuffing



Scars



Decay

- External defects should not extend into or blemish the flesh.

Storing and Handling Guidelines

- Store squash ideally between 41 to 50 °F with a relative humidity of 95%. Under these conditions, squash is acceptable for up to 2 weeks. Squash stored at refrigeration temperatures of 41 °F should have a shelf life of 4 days. Summer squash is subject to chilling injury if held at temperatures below 41 °F for more than 2 days. Do not store squash in dry storage areas.
- Avoid storing squash with ethylene gas producing fruits and vegetables. Ethylene may cause yellowing of zucchini, and reduce the shelf life of squash.
- Remove the blossom and stem end prior to storing. If both are removed without cutting into the flesh it will delay the onset of certain bacterial diseases that cause decay.
- Scrub thoroughly each squash under cold, running water until the skin feels clean, and any grit or debris is removed. Peel the squash if the skin is unusually tough or the surface feels especially gritty after washing and scrubbing.
- Cover, date, and refrigerate sliced summer squash immediately. Use within 24 hours for optimum quality and freshness.
- Slice the squash, blanch for two minutes, quickly cool to 41 °F, package, and freeze for up to three months.