



PROMOTING OREGON WINTER SQUASH

Wondering what Oregon vegetable to feature this fall or winter? Try winter squash. Winter squash comes in a variety of sizes, shapes, and colors. Try several varieties and find your own favorite. Use one or more of the following ideas to promote winter squash in your cafeteria. Kids will love their yummy flavors, unusual shapes and gorgeous colors.

Easy Marketing with Oregon Harvest for Schools

Feature Oregon Winter Squash on your menu this fall and winter. Use the colorful Menu Template found at the Oregon Harvest for Schools website: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3294>. Encourage the elementary teachers to review the menus with their students and note days when Oregon Winter Squash is offered. Provide copies of the Winter Squash newsletter to classroom teachers for distribution to students. And remember to post Oregon Harvest for Schools Winter Squash posters near the cafeteria entrance and at the start of the serving line.

Try a New Recipe

Try Baked Acorn Squash, Roasted Butternut Squash or Spicy Squash Bar. Find both quantity and home recipes at the Minnesota Farm to School website <http://www.extension.umn.edu/farm-to-school/using-food/using-squash.html>. Visit the Washington Grown Food Kit at <http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/ToolKit/23/Winter-Squash/Recipes> for winter squash recipes from Washington state schools.

Winter Squash on Display

Winter squash are available in many varieties. Purchase common ones like butternut and acorn and uncommon ones that students may not be as familiar with like sweet meat, buttercup and carnival. See what is available at your local farmers' market or call your produce distributor for suggestions. Set up a winter squash display in the cafeteria. Label each variety and provide tasty samples for students. Display the Oregon Harvest for Schools poster above the table. Invite your local newspaper or television reporter to come for the display and tasting. For more ideas see *Fruits and Vegetables Galore*, USDA, 2004.

Pumpkin Math

Pumpkins are a natural for math. They come in many sizes. Compare pumpkins by weight. Students can pick up three pumpkins, one at a time, and predict the weights: heaviest, middle, and lightest. Invite them to record their pumpkin weight predictions. At the end of the week or month, weigh the pumpkins. Post the winners. Supervise students during the activity to prevent smashed pumpkins. Provide a place for students to record their predictions.

Student Poetry

Invite students to write a poem about winter squash. Work with a language arts class to conduct a poetry contest. Inspire students by posting the poem *Winter Squash* by Chad Wood (see below). Be sure to share the poems students write.

Introduce Your Students to a Chef

Bring a chef into your school to create excitement among students and teachers. Many chefs enjoy sharing their knowledge with others, especially children. Ask the chef to demonstrate a healthy recipe featuring Oregon Winter Squash. By creating healthy dishes that taste good, chefs have a unique ability to deliver healthy eating messages in a fun and appealing way to the larger audience, particularly children. Be sure to share tastes of the new recipe with students. Consider adding the recipe to your school menu. Find a chef at <http://www.letsmove.gov/chefs-move-schools>

Open House or Harvest Celebration

To involve the local community and make them aware of the great-tasting, nutritious foods that kids are eating in your school or district coordinate an open house. This is similar to a “food show” where parents and community members come learn about and enjoy all the food their children are eating as part of their school meals.

OREGON HARVEST FOR SCHOOLS CLASSROOM ELEMENTS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Science

Children in grades K-2 will enjoy the read-aloud story, *Mousekin's Golden House*, by Edna Miller. After reading the story, place a hollowed pumpkin outside in a protected place and observe the changes weekly. Keep a journal of children's observations.

Story Time

Elementary children will enjoy the books listed below. Be sure to ask the school librarian to get copies of the books in advance of your cafeteria promotion.

Carlos and the Squash Planet (bilingual) by Jan Romero Stevens

Plant Plumbing: A Book About Roots and Stems by Susan Blackaby

Pumpkin Soup by Helen Cooper

A Day at the Pumpkin Patch by Megan Faulkner and Adam Krawesky

Language Arts

Place one or more pumpkins in view of the students. Ask them to contribute a list of words to describe the pumpkin. Students can write similes and metaphors using words that describe pumpkins.

Invite students to make their own word search puzzles out of the descriptive adjectives they came up with in the previous activity.

Invite students to write a paragraph describing a jack-o'-lantern face. When finished, they can exchange assignments and draw the face as described in the paragraph they are handed.

Math Activity

Students can use the box with Recommended Daily Amounts found on the Family Newsletter or School Menu to help answer the following questions.

1. I am a _____ (boy or girl). I am ____ years old. I need ____ cups of vegetables every day.
2. Your mom or dad is making winter squash for dinner. If you ate enough to meet half of your daily goal, how many cups of winter squash will you eat?
3. It is almost dinnertime and you ate one and a half cups of vegetables today. How many more cups do you need to meet your daily goal?
4. You had half cup of winter squash for lunch and half cup of carrots for a snack. How many more cups of vegetables do you need to meet your goal for the day?
5. Chad is a nine year old boy who only eats one cup of vegetables a day. Explain to Chad why it is important to eat more vegetables every day. Give him tips on how to reach his daily vegetable goal.

Story Problem

Draw a picture to go with the story problem below and then solve the problem.

You planted four rows of winter squash in your garden. Each row has eight squash plants. How many squash plants do you have?

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Plant Parts We Eat

Winter squash plants have many edible parts including the fruit, flower and seeds. Many other plants have multiple edible parts like beets and summer squash. Some plants have edible fruit, but poisonous leaves, like tomatoes. Introduce and understand the plant parts we eat—roots, stems, leaves, fruits, flowers and seeds. Assign a plant part to groups of students. Have groups research and report on their assigned plant part, including examples of plants with that edible part. Visit a school garden and have students identify plants and their edible parts.

Creative Thinking

Look for new uses for pumpkins. Cinderella’s pumpkin was used as a coach. A creative New Englander once used a giant pumpkin as a motorboat. (See “*Cinderella, Eat Your Heart Out*” *Yankee* magazine, October 1997, p. 17). Challenge your class to brainstorm new and unusual uses for pumpkins!

Food Advertising

Ask students for some examples of food advertising they see on television. List the names and brands of the foods on the board. Ask students to identify foods on the list that are nutrient dense. How many are nutrient dense and how many are not? Does food advertising affect our food choices? Have students discuss whether they think food advertising may affect their personal food choices. Introduce Oregon Harvest for Schools. Let students know that winter squash from a local farm will be served in the school cafeteria this month. Tell the class that they will be creating advertisements for Oregon Winter Squash. Their advertisements will be posted in the cafeteria to encourage students to try the Oregon Winter Squash. Provide paper and markers for students to create their own Oregon Winter Squash advertisements.

HIGH SCHOOL

Read a Book

Squashed by Joan Bauer pits sixteen-year-old Ellie Morgan and her giant pumpkin Max against the local pumpkin growing champ in the Rock River Pumpkin Weigh-in, where every pound counts. After reading this book, ask students to investigate a local festival. Then prepare a proposal to hold a festival in their hometown with recommendations as to theme, purpose, committees, etc.

Write a Report

Make a list of farms in your area that sell winter squash. Contact the farmer and learn more. You might ask questions such as: How do winter squash grow? When do you harvest winter squash? Where does the squash get sold? How much squash do you grow each year? Is Oregon’s climate good for growing squash? Why or why not? What are common pests or other problems for squash crops? Write up a short report based on what you learn.

Investigate

Invite older students to research a “three sisters” garden plot (squash, corn, beans) and report back to the class. Is there a place where students can plant their own Three Sisters Garden at your school?

Nutritious Winter Squash

Have students identify the nutritional benefits of eating winter squash. How do the nutrients vary between different varieties? Search for recipes with winter squash. List the various ways winter squash can be prepared. Go to the grocery store and identify all the different varieties of winter squash. Do a price comparison. What are the most and least expensive varieties?

More Ideas

Check the two links below for more Winter Squash classroom ideas.

Winter Squash Activity Sheets for Grades K-5 at http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/nut/LACOLLAB_Files/documents/HOTM/Rotation_2010-2011/02%20October-WinterSquash-Pumpkins/WinterSquashActivitySheetsgradeK-5.pdf

Pumpkins and More at <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/pumpkins/education.cfm>

Winter Squash

Blue Hubbard, or Butternut –

A squash is a squash.

Bake at four hundred degrees

‘til the flesh is soft,

sweet like a candy,

healthy, and

fresh!

-Chad Wood