



Harvest Objectives

Families will investigate winter squash, including exploring size, shape, weight, etc.
Families will identify that winter squash grow on vines and have seeds inside.
Families will taste a piece of winter squash.

Harvest Vocab

Fruit Heavy Light Vine

Materials & Prep

3-4 Different Winter Squash (plus enough for each family member to taste small $\frac{1}{4}$ pieces, ideally of different varieties: butternut squash, acorn squash, Lakota squash, banana squash, pumpkins, etc.)
Paper/Chalkboard/Whiteboard and pen/chalk/whiteboard markers
Images (included at end of learning plan)
Items for station discovery (magnifying glasses, ruler, string of different lengths, balance scale)
Paper/pencils/crayons (optional)
Knife & Cutting Board
Taste Test Chart
Stickers (or small Post-It Notes)

Literature Connections

Carlos and the Squash Plant by Jan Romero Stevens
Pumpkin Circle by George Levenson
Eating the Alphabet by Lois Ehlert

Warm Up

- In order to engage the family and activate prior knowledge, create a Squash Discovery Lab. On the table place scientific tools such as measuring tapes/rulers, string of different lengths (for measuring), a scale, magnifying glasses, tub of water, etc. Add the squash and review the different activities with the family and how they should use the equipment. Then encourage the family to explore the squash and scientific equipment. Here are some possibilities:
 - How heavy is a squash? Put the squash on one side of the scale and see how many items are needed on the other side to balance the scale.
 - Do squash sink or float? Put the squash in a tub of water. Watch what happens. Put other classroom items in the tub. Which do the same as the squash?
 - How wide are squash? Trace around a squash on a piece of paper. How many fingers can fit inside the traced squash? Take a piece of string and measure from one side of the squash to the other. Cut the string and tape it onto the piece of paper. Use a ruler, and unifix cubes, to estimate width.
 - Can you make a squash pattern? Using other items around, make a pattern. Squash, paper, squash, paper, squash, paper; or squash, squash, pencil, squash, squash, pencil.



Preschool Home Visit Learning Plan Winter Squash

- One day, cut some of the winter squash open. Allow the family to explore the various seeds and observe them as they dry.
- Add paper, pencils and crayons to the station for the family to draw their observations. Teachers/Home Visitors/Parents can write down the observations on individual papers, or collectively on one large paper.

Explain

- After the family has explored the winter squash, gather together in a large group. Share with the family the names of the winter squash. Explain that botanically they are fruit (there are seeds inside), but many people will call them vegetables. What other fruit can they think of? (Apple, kiwi, orange, eggplant, etc.) If possible, put out pictures of fruits and vegetables and allow the family to think about which ones are fruit.
- Explain how squash grow (on a vine), why we should eat winter squash (healthy eyes, healthy muscles, prevents colds and helps heal cuts) and for each come up with an action to help the family remember. For example, for healthy immune system they can shake one finger while saying “no” and then put a hand on their forehead while saying “fever.” Also explain how to pick good winter squash (they should be firm when you press them gently). Please see the next pages for images to share with the family.

Taste Test

- Wash all winter squash well. If you did not do so at the station, cut each in half and show the family what they look like on the inside.
- Slice each vegetable into pieces. Taste the different varieties and have each family member share which was his/her favorite. Note: It is possible to eat raw winter squash. Consider baking some and asking the family to compare the baked vs. fresh to see which they like best.
- Create a chart that says “I Like” with a smiley face and “I Need to Try Again” with a question mark. Give each child a sticker, and ask them to vote by placing it in a column. Count the number of children in each group and write that number in each column.
- Naturally, we all want to say if we like or didn’t like the taste. But, research shows it can take up to 15 tastes to get our taste buds and minds to “like” some foods. Children should know that our taste buds change over time, and that sometimes we like a food item better based upon the way it is prepared. To help children keep their minds open to healthy foods consider these responses: “Thumbs up if you like squash right away.” “Thumbs up if you need to try again later or try it prepared another way.”
- Review with the family how the squash grows and the health benefits.

Toddler Tasting

To make winter squash baby food puree, cut winter squash in half and remove seeds. Place halves face down in a pan and cover with an inch of water. Bake at 400 degrees for 40-60 minutes, or until the skin puckers and the flesh feels soft. Then scoop the squash flesh out and place into blender/food processor to puree. Add water as necessary to achieve a smooth, thin consistency. When cool, serve and enjoy!



Taste Test Extension

Rule of 15 "Put a food on the table at least 15 times to see if a child will accept it." Susan B. Roberts, Tufts University Nutritionist and Co-author of [Feeding Your Child for Lifelong Health](#)

For an additional tasting experience, prepare this recipe with the family having each member help in an age-appropriate manner.

Raw Butternut Squash Salad (for about 4 servings)

(adapted from: <http://kitchen-parade-veggieventure.blogspot.com/2011/09/raw-butternut-squash-salad.html>)

1/3 of the neck of a small butternut squash	2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 tablespoon currants or dried cranberries (optional)	
Hand grater	Mixing bowl & Spoon
Knife and Cutting board	Plates (one per person)
Wheat Cracker (one per person)	



1. All family members should wash their hands.
 - a. Wet hands with warm water
 - b. Apply hand wash (soap)
 - c. Lather and wash for AT LEAST 15 seconds (the length of the ABC song)
 - d. Rinse both sides of hands with water all the way up to the wrists
 - e. Dry hands and shut off faucet with towel
2. Demonstrate how to rinse the squash under running water and have a family member continue.
3. If needed, demonstrate to an adult how to hold the knife handle correctly and rolling their fingers under, so their finger tips are out of the way. Have the adult trim and slice off the skin of the "neck", and then cut the needed amount into pieces the width of the hand grater.
4. Demonstrate how to hold the squash piece away from the grater and move it downward to grate. Have each family member grate one piece of squash into the mixing bowl. When everyone is done, have them add the remaining ingredients and stir. Serve on a cracker and enjoy!

How does Winter Squash grow?



After pollination, the flower swells to become the winter squash that we eat. Winter squash grows on a vine.



Why should we eat Winter Squash?

Vitamin A



Healthy eyes

Fiber



Healthy digestion, cleans out your system

Vitamin C



Healthy immune system
(heals cuts, prevents colds)

Iron



Healthy muscles