

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How long to cure and store winter squash:

Winter squash may grow during the warmer seasons and be harvested in the late fall, but there's a process to be able to enjoy this squash all summer long. Winter squash can be cured and then stored, and it can be stored up to six months depending on the type of squash. Winter squash is known as a squash that is planted by seed in the spring, grown until the fall when it is harvested and then stored for its winter consumption. It differs from summer squash, like zucchini, which cannot be stored for that long.

How to cure winter squash:

Winter squash has a long growing period, which is why it needs to be planted in the spring. It is typically ready to harvest within 80 to 110 days depending on the variety. When the squash is harvested, it needs to be cured. This means it will be prepared for long-term storage. Winter squash must be cured before it can be stored for a long time.

To cure a winter squash, let the squash sit in a warm place with good air circulation for 10-14 days. You can put the squash on an elevated rack frame, and make sure to keep the squash dry while it is curing. Certain varieties of winter squash require curing, and these are buttercup, butternut and spaghetti squash. Curing is a type of drying, which allows excess moisture to evaporate. It also slows the squash's respiration rate, which is also required for storage. Curing also will allow natural sugars to become more concentrated, which makes the squash even sweeter. The rind will become harder, and that keeps the squash from collapsing or rotting.

Harvest the squash before the night temperatures reach the 40s. The rind should



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already be hard and difficult to scratch with a fingernail. The skin should be dry and dull. Make sure the stem is not broken or loose, or the squash won't store well. Clean the squash with a dry towel and leave it to cure in 80 to 85 degrees and humidity at 80 to 85 percent.

Storing squash:

Once it has been cured, there is a correct way to store the squash. Squash should be stored in a cool, dark place between 50 to 55 degrees and relative humidity at 50 to 70 percent. Make sure you store the squash on a shelf, but not on the floor. Keep its skin dry and do not store it near ripening fruit. Check the squash weekly to make sure it isn't rotting.

What to do with acorn squash:

Although acorn squash is a winter squash it does not need to be cured. If you cure an acorn squash, you actually reverse the process and it won't store as long if it has been cured.



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