



Pumpkins and Squash

It is getting to be that cozy time of year; the unstructured days of summer are over. The cool crisp days and longer nights have arrived before the cold winds and snow of winter keep us inside the house. There isn't much more that says fall than pumpkins and squash. I remember as a child having a dinner of squash baked with sausage links and a little brown sugar as one of those "comfort foods". The idea still conjures up visions of family around the dinner table talking about the day's events. And what would Halloween or Thanksgiving be without pumpkins in some form?

Beyond the green acorn squash and orange round pumpkin, there are many other squash and pumpkin to eat, carve and use in decorating. There are white ones and grey ones, dark green ones and blue ones. There are pumpkins with warts and some named Cinderella (every princess needs one, even if it's only used as a punch bowl). And this year, my new favorite pumpkin with which to decorate is the Galeux d'Eysines. It looks like it has peanuts shells

imbedded in the skin.



Decorating with squash, pumpkins and gourds is a great way to extend the color in your garden. Tuck in a few with mums in pots and it will take you well into November. Or use the bird-bath as a container to hold your favorite varieties. Put a small bale of straw underneath to hold a few more, and you now have a new focal point in your garden.

If you are going to carve pumpkins, spray them with a product like Wilt Pruf, inside and out, to make them last longer. Place a glass in a hollowed out pumpkin. Fill with water and flowers, or simply drop in a pot of mums for a seasonal centerpiece. Carve a Lumina pumpkin with a latticework design then light with a candle - real or battery operated - as an entrance to your home.

As an adult, finding the biggest or

most unique pumpkins has become a passion, as my family will attest to. My husband has become very good at going from 55 to 0 in under six seconds as we spot yet another farm with an array of choices. Certainly, they must have a large blue hubbard!

A farmer once gave me a wonderful recipe using blue hubbard. If you are lucky enough to find a large one, slice it lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Place a bone-in ham in the bottom half and cover with your favorite glaze - mustard, brown sugar, cloves, orange juice or any combination. Place the other half on top. If it doesn't close completely, just balance the top half on the ham.

There are two methods of cooking: on the grill or in the oven. On the grill, spread the coals around the edge, leaving the middle open or for a gas grill, turn off the inner jets and leave the outside jets at medium high. Have a large platter or roasting pan available to transfer it to the kitchen.

In the oven, place the squash in a large roaster (a dark enamel one cuts the cooking time by

oven. The squash and ham are on the size of the squash but Whatever your passion, decorated if the squash is tender when both methods will take 3 to 4 ing, eating, or carving, find new poked with a fork. hours. The result is an incredibly varieties, feel the textures, enjoy moist and flavorful ham. the colors and flavors of autumn. Again, the length of time depends