

4-H +Me = Health: Cutting Fresh Fruit: Butternut Squash, Cantaloupe, and Watermelon

What will we learn? 4-H members will learn how to safely cut butternut squash, cantaloupe, and watermelon into pieces.

Why is this important? Eating more fruits and vegetables is a goal for many people, but learning how to cut up fresh fruit and vegetables can sometimes be intimidating. Many people forgo buying produce if they don't know how to prepare it.

Prep time needed: 20 minutes shopping; optional: 45 minutes to roast the squash; optional: 4 hours for watermelon pomegranate ice pop recipe

Activity length: 30 minutes

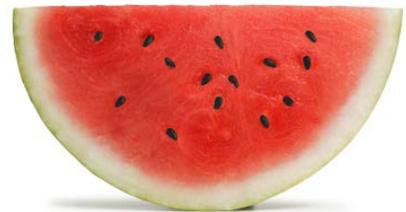
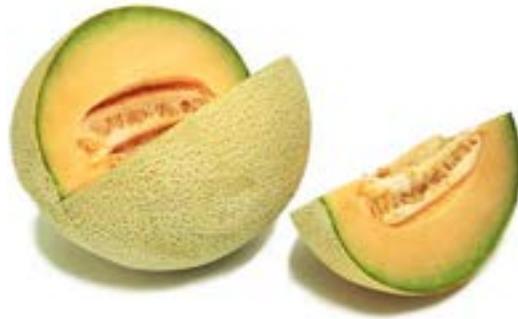
What will we need?

Preparation:

- Butternut squash
- Cantaloupe
- Watermelon

At the meeting:

- Table
- Sharp knife
- Serrated knife
- Table knife
- Spoon
- Vegetable peeler
- Cutting board
- Bowls
- Trash can
- Microwave
- Dish towel
- Sink with running water



What do I need to do?

Preparation:

1. Purchase a butternut squash, cantaloupe, and watermelon from the grocery store. Choose a long butternut squash with a short round section.
2. Optional: Purchase additional fruit to display whole and/or in half.
3. Optional: Purchase ingredients to roast butternut squash.
4. Optional: Purchase ingredients for watermelon-pomegranate ice pops.

At the meeting:

1. Set up a work station with your equipment for the demonstration.
2. As you demonstrate how to cut each fruit, share the facts about each food with your club members.
3. Butternut squash facts: Butternut squash is the most popular variety of winter squash. It comes from the same family as the pumpkin. Butternut squash is very low in calories but is very high in fiber, phytonutrients, and Vitamin A. It is also very high in B-complex vitamins as well. Butternut squash is known for its pleasant, nutty flavor and mildly sweet taste.
4. How to cut the butternut squash: Cut off the ends with a sharp, serrated knife and slice the squash in half widthwise, just above the round part. If the squash is really firm and tough to slice, heat it in the microwave for about one minute to soften it and make it easier to slice. Use a vegetable peeler to remove the skin until you get to the bright yellow-orange part. Then, cut each piece in half lengthwise. Slice off or scoop out the seeds and stringy fiber and throw them away. Finally, dice the rest of the squash into cubes.
5. Cantaloupe facts: Cantaloupe is sometimes called muskmelon. It is in the same family as pumpkins and squash. Cantaloupe is a summer-season fruit, and it requires honeybees to be pollinated effectively. Like butternut squash, cantaloupe is low in calories but is an excellent source of Vitamin A, which is a powerful antioxidant.
6. How to cut the cantaloupe: Cut the cantaloupe in half using a long, sharp knife. Rinse or wipe off the knife every time you cut with it to prevent contamination. Hold the cantaloupe firmly on a cutting board with one hand while cutting it with your other hand, being careful to keep the knife away from your fingers. Using a spoon, scoop out the seeds from the center of the cantaloupe and put them in the bowl to throw away. Then, cut each half in half again so that the cantaloupe is in quarters, remembering to wipe your knife clean after each cut. Carefully cut off the fruit part from the cantaloupe rind for each piece. Cut each cantaloupe piece into your desired cube size.

7. Watermelon facts: Watermelons originated in the Kalahari Desert of Africa with the first recorded harvest happening nearly 5,000 years ago in ancient Egypt. Although 200-300 different varieties of watermelons are grown in the United States and Mexico, China is the world's largest producer of watermelons. Because they are 92 percent water, early explorers actually used watermelons as canteens!
8. How to cut the watermelon: First, rinse the melon and place it on the cutting board. Then, cut the melon in half using a sharp knife. Be sure to rinse the knife after each cut through the rind. Cut each half again so that the watermelon is in quarters. Rinse the knife. Take one quarter at a time and turn it so the rind is on the bottom. Use the dinner knife and cut along the edge of the rind, loosening the melon from the rind. Begin to cut the large chunks into smaller chunks, moving them over to the cutting board to cut them into bite-sized pieces. Place the cut pieces into a bowl and refrigerate before serving. Discard the rind into the trash.

Summary: Healthy nutrition involves preparing and eating a variety of foods. Members will learn fun nutrition facts about butternut squash, cantaloupe, and watermelon as well as how to safely cut those fruits and vegetables. Members will also have the opportunity to taste these delicious fruits.

What 4-H projects does this activity connect with: Health, Gardening, Plant Science, and Foods

Snack connection: Serve freshly cut cantaloupe and watermelon and/or make Roasted Butternut Squash and/or Watermelon-Pomegranate Ice Pops.

Roasted Butternut Squash

Ingredients:

- 1 large butternut squash (about 3 pounds), peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1.5 tablespoons salt, optional
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Place the squash on a sheet pan and drizzle with the olive oil, salt, and pepper and toss well.
- Arrange the squash in one layer and roast for 25–30 minutes, until the squash is tender, turning once with a metal spatula.

Watermelon-Pomegranate Ice Pops (recipe from No Whine with Dinner)

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 cups cubed, seedless watermelon
- 1/2 cup 100% pomegranate blueberry juice
- Optional: Any 100% fruit juice can easily be blended together and then frozen for refreshing pops. You can also add Greek yogurt to get a protein and calcium boost!

Directions:

- Combine the watermelon and juice in a blender and blend until smooth.
- Pour into four 3-ounce ice pop molds and freeze until firm, about 3 hours. If you don't have ice pop molds, divide the liquid between four paper cups, cover each cup with foil, and insert one craft stick through the center of each foil.
- To remove the pops from the molds, run under warm water to loosen.

Resources:

<http://www.extension.org/pages/19871/enjoy-more-fruits-and-vegetables>

<http://www.extension.org/pages/19882/safe-foof-handling-of-fruits-and-vegetables>

<http://www.four-h.purdue.edu>