

International Cooking

New Ideas For America's Oldest Vegetable

(NAPSA)—Squash, that delicious, versatile vegetable, is not only rich in nutrients, but it's also rich in history.

Some botanists believe that squash is the oldest cultivated vegetable in the Americas, as seeds found in Mexican caves have been carbon-dated to 9000 B.C. And two former presidents—George Washington and Thomas Jefferson—were enthusiastic squash growers.

There are many varieties of squash grown in Mexico and exported to the United States. In fact, the warmer climates south of the border allow North Americans to enjoy healthy and good-tasting summer squash year-round.

Summer squash varieties include yellow crookneck squash, yellow straight-neck squash, zucchini and Mexican grey squash. These are soft skinned and pale fleshed, and don't require a lot of cooking. More than 95 percent water, the squash's high water content means that they are very low in calories (about 19 calories per cup of raw sliced squash). Summer squash is a good source of minerals and vitamin A as well as moderate quantities of vitamins B and C.

Executive Chef Noah Aguilar of The Chef's Table Restaurant in Tubac, Ariz., developed Calabazas Con Queso, the following succulent squash dish, for the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas.

More information about squash can be found at www.freshfrommexico.com.



Summer squash is a delicious, nutritious vegetable with a rich history that can be enjoyed year-round.

CALABAZAS CON QUESO

*Developed by Chef Noah Aguilar
Serves 4*

- ¼ cup sliced yellow onion**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 1 cup sliced Mexican grey squash**
- 1 cup sliced summer squash**
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic**
- ¼ teaspoon toasted cumin seeds**
- ½ cup heavy cream**
- ¾ cup shredded pepper jack cheese**
- Salt and pepper to taste**

Sauté onions in oil at a high temperature until they start to caramelize. Next, add squash and cook them until tender, then add garlic and sauté for 30 seconds. Add remaining ingredients and let simmer, stirring constantly until cheese is fully melted. Season and serve.