



## Get to know: Gem Squash

Gem squash, *Cucurbita pepo* var. *pepo*, is a type of summer squash which was domesticated from two wild varieties; *Cucurbita texana* found in the southern and central United States and *Cucurbita fraterna* found in Mexico. It is edible at all stages of its growth. Early gems are the size of golf balls, and the skin and seeds are edible, as is the flesh. As this vegetable matures, the skin hardens to protect the flesh within.



### Nutrition

One cup (100g) of gem squash has 25 calories, 5.9g of carbohydrates, 0.3g of fibre, and 1.75g of protein. With 28 calories per 1-cup raw serving, gem squash can easily be added to your plate, without costing you too many calories. If you're trying to control your calorie intake to lose or maintain a healthy weight, veg like gem squash make a good choice.

### Fun Facts

Gem squash, or 'skorsies', are particularly well-liked by South Africans, but are not commonly found among squash varieties sold in the rest of the world. The saved seeds of gem squash ancestor stock are among the oldest evidence of agriculture found in the Americas, dating back over 10 000 years. In the 'do not try this at home' category, if one cooks a gem squash (without first poking holes into its centre) in the microwave at high power, it will explode and very likely take the microwave with it.

### Health Benefits

Gem squash is low in Saturated Fat and Sodium, and very low in Cholesterol. It is also a good source of Protein, Vitamin A, Thiamin, Niacin, Phosphorus and Copper, and a very good source of Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Riboflavin, Vitamin B6, Folate, Magnesium, Potassium and Manganese. Gem squash, like many other summer squash, help regulate blood sugar and provide antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits as well.

## What you can try with gem squash:

### Honey roasted gem squash with walnuts

by: Otago Farmer's Market

Serves: 4

#### What You Need:

- 2 gem squash, cut in half, seeds removed and cut into even sized wedges
- 200g walnuts
- 2 tsp fresh rosemary, roughly chopped
- 1 clove garlic, bruised (lightly squashed)
- 1 Tbsp honey
- 2 tsp red wine vinegar
- 4-6 tsp good quality oil (rice bran oil)
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

#### What to do:

1. Preheat the oven to 200C. Place the prepared gem squash on a baking dish, drizzle over a little oil and honey. Season with salt, pepper and one teaspoon fresh rosemary leaves and toss to combine. Roast until golden and tender (10minutes) turning once while cooking.
2. While they are cooking place the walnuts on another baking tray and toast lightly in the oven for 2-5 minutes. Give them a shake to move them around a little. You need to watch them as they will colour fast and you don't want blackened nuts as they are bitter. Remove and set aside to cool.
3. In a mortar and pestle, add the garlic clove and rosemary and pound to a paste. Add the walnuts and crush together. Then add a drop of red wine vinegar, spoon of honey and drizzle in enough olive oil to form a thick paste. Taste for seasoning and then adjust for balance it should be evenly flavoured.
4. Serve the hot roasted gem squash with the walnut paste drizzled over. An option is to scatter over a few wild rocket or any robust peppery leaves as it adds a freshness at the end.

[otagofarmersmarket.org.nz/recipe/56/HONEY-ROAST-GEM-SQUASH-WITH-WALNUTS](http://otagofarmersmarket.org.nz/recipe/56/HONEY-ROAST-GEM-SQUASH-WITH-WALNUTS)

## Try these other recipes

- Gem squash with a cheesy spicy creamed sweetcorn filling: [www.cooksister.com/2013/10/gem-squash-cheesy-spicy-creamed-sweetcorn-filling.html](http://www.cooksister.com/2013/10/gem-squash-cheesy-spicy-creamed-sweetcorn-filling.html)
- Provençal Stuffed Squash with puy lentils: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIZxMvYRkA0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIZxMvYRkA0)
- Stuffed gem squash with buckwheat, mint and preserved lemon: [www.from-hand-to-mouth.com/2014/11/02/stuffed-pattypan-and-gem-squash](http://www.from-hand-to-mouth.com/2014/11/02/stuffed-pattypan-and-gem-squash)