



CULINARY  
INSTITUTE OF  
CHILD NUTRITION

# CULINARY QUICK BITES

KNIFE SKILLS: HOW TO CUT WINTER SQUASH



# **CULINARY QUICK BITES**

## **KNIFE SKILLS: HOW TO CUT WINTER SQUASH**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Aleshia Hall-Campbell, PhD, MPH

**Institute of Child Nutrition**  
The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences  
[www.theicn.org](http://www.theicn.org)

Key Area: 2 – Operations

**USDA Professional Standards Code**  
Food Production – 2100

**2023**

## DISCLAIMER

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the Institute of Child Nutrition at the University of Mississippi. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) found online at <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint> and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2023). *Culinary quick bites knife skills: How to cut winter squash*. University, MS: Author.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by the University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The university cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images. Please contact [helpdesk@theicn.org](mailto:helpdesk@theicn.org) for more information.

©2023, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**3** DISCLAIMER

**4** TABLE OF CONTENTS

**5** TRAINING OVERVIEW

**5** KEY AREA

**5** PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

**6** FACILITATOR'S NOTES

**7** MATERIALS NEEDED

**8** LESSON OVERVIEW

**9** INFOGRAPHIC: HOW TO CUT WINTER SQUASH

**10** TRAINING VIDEO

**10** QR CODE

**11** ACTIVITY

**13** POST ACTIVITY

# TRAINING OVERVIEW

The Culinary Quick Bites training series is a tool to help child nutrition professionals develop and refine their culinary skills. Each lesson is designed to last approximately fifteen minutes. Each lesson should be facilitated (led) by the person responsible for overseeing food production at a meal site, service area, or the district level.

Training facilitators should review the training, in its entirety, prior to conducting the training.

This training has been developed to address a variety of learning styles. The training includes an overview of the topic presented by the facilitator, an infographic to reinforce the training topic visually, a video to demonstrate the topic, and an activity to reinforce learning.

Please contact the Institute of Child Nutrition Help Desk at 1-800-321-3054 or [helpdesk@theicn.org](mailto:helpdesk@theicn.org) if you have any questions about how best to facilitate this training.

## KEY AREA

Key Area: 2 – Operations

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

### FOOD PRODUCTION – 2100

Employee will be able to effectively utilize food preparation principles, production records, kitchen equipment, and food crediting to prepare foods from standardized recipes, including those for special diets.

2130 – Develop culinary skills necessary for school meal preparation.

## FACILITATOR'S NOTES

This training counts for 15 minutes of training credit under USDA Professional Standards learning objective 2130 – Develop culinary skills necessary for school meal preparation.

The activity at the end of the lesson involves preparing and cutting winter squash. This activity helps reinforce knowledge and skills learned during this lesson. The winter squash prepared during this lesson may be included in the next day's menu production.

Before the training, prepare for the lesson activity and set up the kitchen workstation as described on page 11.

Deliver the lesson/training to participants:

- Read the lesson overview to the participants.
- Discuss the infographic and how it relates to the training topic.
- View the instruction video with participants.
- Answer any questions participants may have on the lesson, infographic, and video.

Complete the activity as instructed on page 11.

## MATERIALS NEEDED



- Anti-slip mat – 1 per person
- Cutting board – 1 per person
- Chef knife – 1 per person
- Washed winter squash– at least 1 per person
- Waste pan – as needed
- Food pan – as needed
- Infographic: How to Cut Winter Squash – 1 per person
- Access to a screen to show the training video. Possible options include:
  - Site computer monitor with sound
  - Projector with sound
  - Tablets and smartphones
    - A QR code has been provided for quick access to the video on handheld devices.

# LESSON OVERVIEW

## OBJECTIVE:

At the end of this lesson, participants will be able to demonstrate how to cut a winter squash.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON WINTER SQUASH

- There are many varieties of winter squash.
- Common varieties include acorn, banana, butternut, delicata, and pumpkin.
- Winter squash is hard-shelled and is native to the Americas.
- Native Americans include winter squash in the group known as “The Three Sisters,” along with beans and corn. These vegetables are an important aspect of Indigenous culture and food supply. All three are planted together. The corn provides a stalk for the beans. The beans provide nitrogen to the soil. The squash plants shade the ground to retain moisture and prevent weed growth.
- Winter squashes have several health benefits as they are packed with nutrients, including vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin C, fiber, manganese, and copper.
- Winter squash is high in the phytonutrient carotenoid, which promotes a healthy immune system, as well as good vision, skin health, and bone health.

## USES

- Winter squash is generally cooked before being eaten, and the skin or rind is not usually eaten as it is with summer squash.
- Roasting winter squash is the most common form of preparation.
- Winter squash can also be mashed into a dish similar to mashed sweet potatoes.
- Pureed winter squash makes a delicious hearty curry, soup, or stew.

## HOW TO CUT A WINTER SQUASH

- Utilizing the infographic, review the process for cutting winter squash.
- Review the embedded training video.

***After we review the infographic and video, there will be an activity to reinforce skills learned.***



## Culinary Quick Bites KNIFE SKILLS

## HOW TO CUT WINTER SQUASH

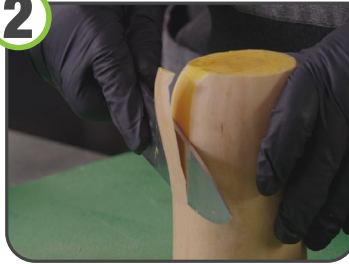
### Remove rind

1



Lay the squash on its side, remove each end, and cut at the base of the neck to remove the bulbous section.

2



Stand the squash on one of the cut ends to prevent it from rolling. Remove the skin by running the blade from top to bottom, following the natural curvature of the squash. Repeat with the bulbous section.

### Remove seeds

1



Cut the bulbous section in half to expose the seeds.

2



Use a spoon to scrape out the seeds from the center of each half.

### Slice

1



Place squash halves cut-side down on the cutting board.

2



Cut each half into slices of the desired width.

### Cube

1



Cut squash halves lengthwise into 1-inch thick slices. Then cut each slice lengthwise into 1-inch wide sticks.

2



Arrange squash sticks side-by-side and cut across the sticks into 1-inch cubes.



CULINARY  
INSTITUTE OF  
CHILD NUTRITION

# CULINARY QUICK BITES

## Knife Skills: How to Cut Winter Squash

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

<https://vimeo.com/695264147/8784668bed>

### QR CODE

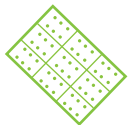
Utilize the QR code embedded to the right to share the video with staff utilizing handheld devices such as smartphones and tablets. Use the photo app on the smart device to scan the code to be directed to the video.



# ACTIVITY

## SETUP

### MATERIALS:



Anti-slip mat  
– 1 per person



Washed winter squash  
– at least 1 per person



Food pan  
– as needed



Cutting board  
– 1 per person



Waste pan  
– as needed



Infographic: How to Cut Winter Squash  
– 1 per person



Chef knife  
– 1 per person

**NOTE:** If your site does not have enough materials for all participants to complete the activity simultaneously, divide participants into groups based on your materials. Allow enough time for each participant to complete the activity.

## SETUP INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATOR

- 1** Prior to the training, gather all of the materials needed for the activity. Pre-wash the winter squash that will be used for the training. Set up a workstation for each participant with an anti-slip mat, cutting board, chef knife, and a winter squash.
- 2** During the activity, remember to monitor and observe staff as they practice their culinary skills.

# ACTIVITY

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 1** Refer the participants to the infographic. Then read the instructions for the activity. Ask the participants if there are any questions before beginning the activity.
- 2** Instruct all participants to wash their hands and put on single-use gloves before starting the activity.
- 3** Each participant will cut a winter squash. Using one-half of the winter squash, participants will practice slicing it. Using the other half of the winter squash, participants will practice cubing it.
  - Instruct participants to take their time and practice their cuts carefully.
  - Discard waste.

## POST ACTIVITY

- After completing the hands-on activity, recap the lesson with the participants. Offer an opportunity for participants to share their learning experience during the training and highlight any tips or takeaways they want to share with the group.
- If time allows, facilitate a discussion with the participants. Suggested discussion topics include:
  - Ask participants to discuss the types of winter squash students would enjoy seeing on the menu and what type of cut would be more appropriate.
  - Ask participants to give some thought as to which recipes the students would like to see winter squash incorporated into the menus.
- Ask if the participants feel more comfortable cutting winter squash or want more time to develop the skill further if time allows.
- Plan the next training session based on the needs of your staff.



The University of Mississippi

School of Applied Sciences

800-321-3054

[www.theicn.org](http://www.theicn.org)