

LULU PORK CHOP

ROASTED DELICATA SQUASH WITH RED RICE STUFFING

Delicata squash is a small oblong variety that tastes like a mashup of sweet potatoes and corn. Weighing in at about 8 ounces, the delicata is as long as most kitchen knives (6 to 8 inches), dimensions that make it easy to hold in one hand (a rarity among winter squash). Its thin skin means it's easy to pierce with a knife, making prep a breeze. I love the color contrast when they're filled with red rice, but any cooked grain will work.

Makes 6 servings

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- 3 delicata squash
- oil for greasing the squash
- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 cup Bhutanese red rice (or long-grain Wehani)
- 1/8 cup olive oil
- ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- ½ cup unsalted shelled pistachios, chopped (Plan B: walnuts or almonds)
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries or cherries, hopped
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon peeled and minced fresh ginger
- Zest of ½ lemon or orange, plus 1 or 2 squeezes of the juice
- A few pinches of ground chile pepper of choice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste

Preheat the oven to 400 F.

Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.

Wash the squash and remove any stuck-on dirt, then towel dry. Trim both ends.

Slice in half lengthwise, then scoop out seeds and stringy pulp.

Place in a medium bowl and coat with enough oil (neutral or olive oil is fine) until squash is slightly glistening, 1 to 2 tablespoons. Salt if you like, about ¼ teaspoon. (Not a big deal if you don't.)

Arrange in a single layer on lined pan. Roast until fork tender and the flesh begins to recede at the edges, 30 to 35 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the rice: Bring the water and rice to a boil in a medium saucepan.

Lower the heat to low and cover. Cook until tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Keep covered off the heat for 10 minutes. Drain any residual water as needed.

Transfer the rice to a large bowl and the olive oil, parsley, nuts, dried fruit, fennel seeds, ginger, citrus zest and chile pepper. Stir until the rice is coated with the oil and evenly mixed. Stir in the salt.

Fill each roasted squash half with about 1/3 cup of the filling. Return to the oven and heat for about 15 minutes, until the rice is warmed through.