Squash is as American as apple pie, so why isn’t this delicious, healthy, and versatile ingredient as prominent at our holiday tables?

There are so many varieties of winter squash that it’s hard to pick a favorite. And though the chefs at The Culinary Institute of America haven’t come to a consensus about which one is their favorite, this recipe for acorn squash with cranberry-orange compote might just end up being yours.

Acorn squash is a cousin to a wide range of hard-skinned squashes like butternut, pumpkin, kabocha and hubbard. Each has its own unique qualities and uses, but the acorn stands out.

It is widely available, and you’re likely to see its familiar acorn shape and orange and green skin in most grocery stores and fall farmers’ markets. It’s easy to slice, and when cooked, its skin is tender, flavorful, and colorful — so no need to peel. Even better: *Acorn squash contains half the calories of sweet potatoes and is rich in fiber and vitamins.*
The flesh is sweet and nutty, with a buttery flavor that perfectly complements the tartness of the cranberry-orange compote. It is most commonly baked, or roasted, as in this recipe, and because of its small size and cup-like shape when halved, it can be filled with stuffing before being baked (a great holiday idea for the vegetarians in your life).

In addition, its seeds are perfect for roasting plain or seasoned, and can be enjoyed on their own as a cocktail snack or for a crunchy addition to your Thanksgiving salad.

**Ingredients**

**Baked Acorn Squash**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acorn squash</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey or maple syrup</td>
<td>3 Tbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>1/4 tsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranberry-Orange Compote</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Cranberry-Orange Compote**

(Makes 2 cups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole cranberries</td>
<td>5 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange juice</td>
<td>3/4 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar, as needed</td>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange zest, blanched</td>
<td>2 ounces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt &amp; white pepper</td>
<td>1/4 tsp</td>
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**Directions**

1. **Place the squash**, cut sides up, on a baking sheet. Sprinkle each piece with the honey, maple syrup, or sugar. Divide the butter into 4 pieces and place 1 piece onto each quarter. Season with salt and pepper.

2. Cover the squash with foil and bake in a 400 degree F oven for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and continue baking, basting periodically, until tender, about 15 minutes more.

3. Top each portion of squash with Cranberry-Orange Compote and serve on a heated plate.

4. **Combine the cranberries, juice**, and enough water to barely cover the berries in a medium sauce pan. Add the sugar and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Simmer until the berries are softened and the liquid is thickened.

5. Stir in the orange zest. Season with salt and pepper. Serve hot.

*Nutrition information per serving of the baked acorn squash: 158 calories; 103 calories from fat; 12 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 31 mg cholesterol; 296 mg sodium; 15 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 1 g protein.*

*Nutrition information per serving of the compote: 154 calories; 2 calories from fat; 0 g fat (0 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 77 mg sodium; 42 g carbohydrate; 7 g fiber; 27 g sugar; 1 g protein.*