



# MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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## **Eat Local All Winter With Fall Produce From Area Farmers Markets**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** -- Long before squashes, pumpkins and all manner of colorful autumn produce landed on magazine covers as seasonal centerpieces, they were food - specifically, foods with hard or thick, durable skins and rinds that remained edible through the winter, so long as they were properly stored.

These days, traffic to local farm markets slows down once customers have purchased autumn décor like Indian corn, mums and gourds, but many fresh, local food crops are available long after hard freezes put summer produce fields to rest.

Sweet potatoes, apples, turnips and turnip greens, onions, winter squash, pumpkins, dried beans and white potatoes are all overflowing at farm markets across the state. In many areas of the state, cool weather crops like cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower will also remain plentiful right up until the coldest part of the year. Honey, nuts, sorghum syrup, jellies, cured meats and dairy products are also delicious staples of traditional fall farm markets.

All autumn produce should be stored in cool, relatively dry conditions, ideally between 50 to 59 degrees. Properly stored, they can be kept for up to six months.

Popular winter squashes include butternut, Hubbard, Patty Pan, Waltham, spaghetti, carnival and acorn squash. Pumpkins with names like "Sugar," "New England Pie" and "Winter Luxury" are giveaways for small sized, old varieties perfect for cooking. Other commonly available edible pumpkins include the pinkish, flattened Long Island Cheese pumpkin; the Australian Blue, or Jarrahdale pumpkin; and an old French variety called Rouge Vif d'Etampes, or Cinderella pumpkin, which is large, somewhat flattened and deeply ridged, with an almost neon red-to-pink and orange color. The Cushaw melon, or sweet potato pumpkin, is striped in green or gold and shaped like a fat, curvy gourd. It looks nothing like a pumpkin but is often used like pumpkin in recipes.

Sweet potatoes can be found at virtually every local farm market across the state throughout the fall, peaking in November. Do not wash them until just before use, since moisture from washing increases spoilage. Sweet potatoes convert most of their starches into sugars as they mature during storage.

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With cold, dry refrigerator conditions and smart selection, freshly picked apples can stay fresh for months. Apples that are the most ripe or have any blemishes, including spots or bruises, should be eaten right away or preserved by freezing or canning.

To help shoppers use farm-direct produce, a measures equivalency chart is available online at [www.picktnproducts.org](http://www.picktnproducts.org). The measures chart goes all the way from bushels down to a “pinch,” starting with an approximate weight for a bushel of a particular fruit or vegetable. From there a cook can keep dividing down the chart until familiar recipe measures, like quarts and cups, appear.

To access the equivalency chart from the Pick Tennessee Products home page, click on “Food” at the left hand side of the page. From “Food,” click on “Fruits and Vegetables” to reveal the measures conversion guide. Pick Tennessee Products, a Tennessee Department of Agriculture promotion, helps consumers identify and choose farm-direct, artisan and other locally made foods. The Pick Tennessee Products website features lists of farms, farm markets, seasonal recipes, and seasonal on-farm activities.

For more information, contact Pamela Bartholomew at [Pamela.Bartholomew@tn.gov](mailto:Pamela.Bartholomew@tn.gov) or 615-837-5160. Visit [www.picktnproducts.org](http://www.picktnproducts.org) and follow Pick Tennessee Products on Facebook and Twitter.

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Smart phone users can use this QR code to go directly to the equivalents chart.



### Candy Topped Squash

Yield: 8 servings

5 pounds butternut, acorn or Hubbard squash

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided

4 tablespoons firmly packed light brown sugar, divided

1/3 cup golden raisins

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/4 cup finely chopped pecans or walnuts

2 tablespoon corn syrup

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Preheat the oven to 400°F. Cut the squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Discard any strings along with the seeds. Place the cut side down in a 13x9-inch baking dish and add water to a depth of 1/2-inch. Cover with aluminum foil and bake 45 minutes to 1 hour or until tender. Drain and scoop out the pulp, discarding the outer shell.

In a large saucepan, combine the squash pulp, 2 tablespoons of the butter and 2 tablespoons of the brown sugar. Blend with a potato masher until smooth. Stir in the raisins, salt, and nutmeg. Place over medium heat and cook 10 minutes, stirring often.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine the pecans, corn syrup, and the remaining butter and brown sugar. Cook over medium heat 5 minutes or until the sugar dissolves.

Transfer the squash mixture into a serving dish and drizzle the candied pecan mixture over the top. Serve immediately.