

Winter Squash & Hazelnut Salad

Serves 2-3 | 20 minutes prep + 30 minutes cook time

Developed by Wellspent's own Elizabeth Cantrell while she was working under former Chez Panisse pastry chef Jehnee Rains, this winter salad is a study in contrasts. The play of fresh spinach and crunchy hazelnuts against earthy roasted squash makes for a texturally satisfying dish that delivers layers of fall flavors while still feeling light on its feet. It's flexible too; we typically use acorn or kabocha squash, but you can swap in butternut or delicata if you prefer a slightly sweeter taste and creamier texture. The bacon is optional too; including it adds a nice savory richness and even more texture, but the salad still feels complete if you choose to leave it out. All this flexibility makes this our favorite kind of dish: it's easy enough to whip up for a weeknight, but impressive enough to earn a spot on your holiday table.

1 medium sized acorn squash

6 slices of bacon (optional)

1 cup roasted hazelnuts

1 bunch spinach

**1/3 cup + 1 tablespoon olive oil,
divided**

**3 tablespoons champagne
vinegar**

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

1/2 teaspoon maple syrup

1/4 - 1/2 teaspoon salt to taste

**1/8 teaspoon freshly ground
black pepper**

**2 tablespoons shallot, finely
chopped**

Step 1 Preheat your oven to 350°.

Step 2 Quarter the squash carefully—if it feels unstable, try scoring the rind with a smaller knife first and then using a larger knife to halve. Scoop out seeds and pulp then slice the quarters into 1/2" pieces.

Step 3 Add the squash to a mixing bowl and drizzle with olive oil, salt and pepper then mix to make sure all the squash is evenly coated. Lay the squash flat on a baking sheet and bake for about 30 minutes, flipping halfway for an even bake.

Step 4 Cook the bacon in the oven on a baking sheet until done to your liking and transfer to a plate lined with paper towels to cool. Once cool, chop into smaller pieces for topping and set aside.

Step 5 Using a mug or any heavy-ish, flat-bottomed object (can of beans, rolling pin, small skillet, etc), crush the hazelnuts into pieces: place the mug on top of the hazelnuts and slowly push down (no need to smash or hammer, you don't want the pieces too small).

Step 6 To make the dressing, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, syrup, mustard, salt and pepper in a mixing bowl. When the dressing emulsifies, stir in the shallot and mix ag

Step 7 After squash is fully cooked, allow it to cool before removing the rind with a knife.

Step 8 Combine all ingredients (reserving about 1/4 of the chopped bacon and crushed hazelnuts) in a pretty bowl and dress just before serving. Garnish with remaining bacon pieces and crushed hazelnuts.