

LUKAS VOLGER

Spicy Marinated Butternut Squash

If the instructions for trimming down the squash here sound intimidating, know that you can cut your squash into whatever shape you please, including pre-cut, pre-peeled cubes from the grocery store. Just roast them until tender and then toss with the marinade. What you'll lose in the process is the function of a nice big slab of squash, which is perfect for sandwiches and whatnot. But the marinated squash cubes will still be very delicious in salads and all kinds of other treatments.

Note: If you're unfamiliar, gochujang is a spicy-sweet, fermented Korean chili paste; I've seen it increasingly at grocery stores, but it's also readily available at Korean and Asian markets and of course available online — I included a link to my favorite brand below. Gochujang sauce is different, so make sure to seek out the paste. Use it in your marinades, dressings, and to give some distinction to roasted sweet potatoes.

Makes about 1 sheet-pan of squash

1 good-sized butternut squash with a thick, firm neck
Olive oil
Salt
Zest and juice of 2 lemons
Zest and juice of 1 orange
3 cloves of garlic, smashed and coarsely chopped
1 ½ tablespoons [gochujang](#) (not gochujang sauce)
1 teaspoon light-colored miso paste
1 teaspoon maple syrup
½ teaspoon kosher salt

For Focaccia Sandwiches

1 half-sheet-pan sized focaccia
12 slices sharp provolone, havarti, cheddar or other buttery but softly assertive cheese (or your favorite vegan deli cheese)
1 small bunch watercress, thick stems trimmed off
Salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

To prepare the squash, trim the ends and cut it in half where the neck meets the bulbous base. If your squash has a really long neck, cut it into two pieces as well, which will make it easier to work with. Peel off all the skin using a vegetable peeler or by propping them upright on your cutting board and shaving it off with a chef's knife (similar to trimming the skin off an orange when making supremes). Cut the bulbous part in half to scoop out and discard the seeds. Now, working one at a time, use the flat, cut-side ends of the squash to keep them upright and secure on your cutting board, and carefully, using a strong and sharp chef's knife, cut the squash pieces into broad slabs about ½-inch thick. ([Here's a video tutorial that may be useful to watch.](#))

Arrange in as best a single layer as you can manage on the prepared baking sheet, then drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with salt, then use your hands to coat the pieces evenly. Transfer to the oven and roast for 25 to 35 minutes, until tender but not mushy.

Meanwhile, combine the zest, citrus juices, garlic, gochujang, miso, maple, and ½ teaspoon salt in a blender or, if you have a hand blender, a tall jar, and blend thoroughly until smooth. Combine the roasted squash (while it's hot) and the marinade in a wide container that has some depth — a 9 x 13-inch Pyrex baking dish works great — and carefully turn to coat evenly. Allow to marinate for at least an hour or ideally overnight covering and transferring them to the fridge once the squash is cool.

Enjoy on sandwiches, tacos, and more, or as a base for cooked grains or as a fork-and-knife steak-like thing, topped with toasted seeds and crumbled feta and your favorite medley of fresh herbs.

To make focaccia sandwiches: Carefully split your focaccia in half. I find it easiest to do this in two parts, after cutting it in half first. Cover the base with the sliced cheese, then top with the squash, watercress, and a few sprinklings of salt and pepper. Close the sandwich and cut into whatever size you prefer.