



Roasted Squash Salad with Dates and Spicy Pecans

Olive oil cooking spray

1 Tbs. sugar

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 Tbs. (3 oz./90 g.) honey

1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper, or to taste

3/4 cup (3 oz./90 g.) pecan halves

1 large acorn squash, 1 1/2-2 lb. (750 g.-1 kg.)

6 Tbs. (3 fl. oz./90 ml.) extra-virgin olive oil

1/4 cup (2 fl. oz./60 ml.) vinegar

1 Tbs. Dijon mustard

1 large head or 2 small heads curly endive, about 10 oz. (315 g.) total weight, cored, tough stems removed, and torn into bite-size pieces

3/4 cup (4 oz./125 g.) dates, pitted and quartered lengthwise

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Preheat the oven to 325°F (165°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly coat the parchment with the cooking spray.

In a medium bowl, stir together the sugar and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Set aside.

In a frying pan, warm 2 tablespoons of the honey over low heat. Add the cayenne pepper and stir to mix well. Add the pecans and stir to coat. Spread the nuts in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet and toast in the oven until fragrant and lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool slightly. Then add the nuts to the bowl with the sugar mixture and toss to coat. Discard the parchment paper and spread the pecans out in a single layer on the baking sheet to cool completely.

Raise the oven temperature to 450°F (230°C). Line a second rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and coat generously with the cooking spray.

Cut the squash in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds. Cut the flesh crosswise into slices 1 inch (2.5 cm.) thick. Pile the squash pieces on the prepared baking sheet. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, season with salt and black pepper, and toss to coat. Spread the squash out in a single layer. Roast, turning several times, until fork-tender and lightly browned all over, about 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cover with aluminum foil to keep warm.

In a bowl, whisk together the vinegar, mustard and the remaining 2 tablespoons honey. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons (2 fl. oz./60 ml.) olive oil in a slow, steady stream, whisking constantly until a smooth, emulsified dressing forms. Season with salt and black pepper.

Put the endive in a large salad bowl. Pour in the dressing and toss to coat thoroughly. Add the warm squash, pecans and the dates and toss to combine. Serve right away.

Serves 6-8.

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