



Kabocha, a pumpkin-like squash with sweet, orangey-gold flesh and dark green, edible skin, frequently appears on the menu in Japan. The classic way to prepare *kabocha* is to simmer it in a slightly sweet soy-tinged stock.

Sometimes the skin is barely beveled, other times generously removed; it is usually an aesthetic choice though for some people it may be a texture preference. There is a broad range of cooking times for different varieties of *kabocha*; be prepared to test for tenderness midway and adjust simmering time accordingly.

CLASSIC Soy-Simmered Kabocha

Makes 4-6 servings.

- 1/2 *kabocha* (pumpkin squash), about 1 pound (450 grams)
- 1 to 1 and 1/2 cups *Dashi* stock (see **KITCHEN NOTES** bottom page 3)
- 1 tablespoon *saké*
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 to 1 and 1/4 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch + 1 tablespoon cold water; optional clear sauce

Wash the *kabocha* skin and pat dry. Scoop out seeds and cut into 12 pieces. To keep the vegetable from crumbling as it cooks, bevel the edges of each piece. Use a vegetable peeler or a knife to trim off a narrow strip of peel at the edge.



Arrange the pieces skin-side down in a pot, in a single layer. Add enough stock to barely cover the *kabocha*, about 1 cup. Place an *otoshi-buta* (dropped lid) over the *kabocha* OR cover the pieces with paper towel.



Place the pot on the stove over medium-high heat. Bring the stock to a boil, then adjust the heat to maintain a steady, but not very vigorous, simmer. After 3 minutes, test for tenderness: insert a toothpick or thin bamboo skewer in a piece of *kabocha*. Ideally, it will meet with a bit of resistance. Carefully flip all the pieces of *kabocha* over so that the skin faces up.



Add the *saké* and sugar. Replace the dropped lid (or paper towel) and simmer for about 2 more minutes until barely tender. Test again with a toothpick. This time you should be able to pierce the skin without much difficulty, but it should not be so soft that the *kabocha* crumbles.

Add **ONE TABLESPOON** soy sauce and continue to simmer for another minute or two. Add more stock if needed to keep the *kabocha* covered while it simmers.

Test again. The toothpick should meet no resistance whatsoever now. Taste and adjust sweet-savory balance with the remaining soy sauce if need be. Swirl the pot to meld flavors.

Remove the pot from the heat. It is in this cooling down stage that retained heat will continue to tenderize, and the flavor of the simmering broth will be drawn in to the *kabocha*. The Japanese serve this (and many soy-simmered dishes) at room temperature but if you prefer, re-heat briefly just before serving.

Make a sauce, if you like, from the simmering liquid remaining in the pot. Place on the stove and return to a simmer. Stir the cornstarch mixture to be sure it is smooth before adding to the pot. Stirring constantly, cook the sauce over medium heat until thickened. Pour over the *kabocha* just as you serve.

Classic Soy-Simmered Kabocha (with variations)

かぼちゃ煮物 (色々)
Kabocha no Nimono (Iro iro...)



Classic Soy-Simmered *Kabocha* is delicious on its own... but there are also many wonderful variations, too.

(Variation #1): served with a briefly blanched green vegetable such as okra ...

(Variation #2): sauced with savory ground chicken or turkey...

(Variation #3): simmered in stock infused with cinnamon and ginger

Separate recipes for each of these are posted to **KCCC** Projects.

KITCHEN NOTES

Recipes for *dashi* stocks can be found at a Taste of Culture's website:

Kelp Alone Stock:

<https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Kelp-Alone-Stock.pdf>

Standard Sea Stock: [https://tasteofculture.com/wp-](https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Standard-Sea-Stock-Smoky-Sea-Stock.pdf)

[content/uploads/2020/08/Standard-Sea-Stock-Smoky-Sea-Stock.pdf](https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Standard-Sea-Stock-Smoky-Sea-Stock.pdf)