

Kabocha Spiced with Cinnamon and Ginger (かぼちゃのシナモン生姜煮) *Kabocha no Shinamon Shōga Ni*



The spice we know as cinnamon is obtained from the inner bark of several species of tree in the genus *Cinnamomum*. Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), China, Vietnam and Indonesia all boast large crops of cinnamon. The spice first entered Japan from Asia in the Edo Period (1603-1868), Though not used as often as other spices, cinnamon is remarkably well-suited to flavoring *kabocha*, especially when paired with ginger.

Makes 4-6 servings.

1/2 *kabocha* (pumpkin squash), about 1 pound (450 grams)
1 and 1/4 cups *Dashi* (see **KITCHEN NOTES** page 2)
1 (or more) sticks cinnamon
1 tablespoon *saké*
2 teaspoons sugar
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 knob fresh ginger (about 2 ounces/60 grams) grated and pressed to extract juice
(young ginger yields 2 tablespoons of milder juice; mature ginger yields 1 tablespoon of more intensely flavored juice)



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 pieces (trim off a narrow strip of peel at the edge of each piece of *kabocha* with a peeler or knife).

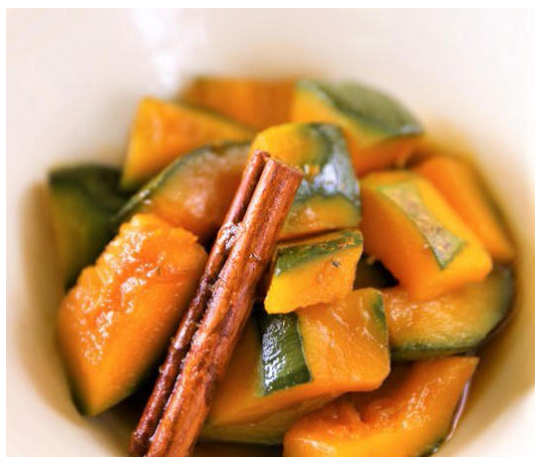
Arrange the pieces skin-side down in a pot, in a single layer. Add enough stock to barely cover the *kabocha*, about 1 cup. Add cinnamon sticks to the pot.

Place the pot over medium-high heat, bringing the stock to a simmer. Cover the *kabocha* with a circle of cooking parchment paper cut to be slightly smaller than your pot OR cover the pieces with a paper towel.



There is a broad range of cooking times for *kabocha*; different varieties of pumpkin-squash require different amounts of time to cook. Test for tenderness after simmering for 3 minutes. A toothpick or thin bamboo skewer should meet with some resistance. If it is difficult to insert the toothpick simmer for another 2 minutes and test again.

Carefully flip all the pieces of *kabocha* over so that the skin faces up. Add the *saké* and sugar and replace the parchment paper or paper towel and simmer for about 2 more minutes until tender (no resistance). Add the soy sauce and simmer for another minute.



Remove the pot from the stove and add the ginger juice, swirling the pot to distribute. It is in this cooling down stage that the cinnamon and ginger flavors are drawn in to the *kabocha*. The Japanese serve this (and many soy-simmered dishes) at room temperature and the aromatic spiciness of this cinnamon-ginger combination will be most intense at room temperature. If you prefer to eat this dish warm, re-heat it briefly just before serving.

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-content/uploads/2020/08/Standard-Sea-Stock-Smoky-Sea-Stock.pdf>