

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
 - Cook Time: 30 minutes
 - Total Time: 45 minutes
 - Servings: 4 as a side dish, 2 as a main
 - Course: Salad, Side Dish
 - Cuisine: American, Seasonal
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Ingredients

For the Salad:

- 1 medium (about 2 lbs / 900g) butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch

cubes

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional, for a smoky depth)
- 6 cups (about 5 oz / 140g) fresh arugula (rocket), washed and dried
- ½ cup pecan halves
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup crumbled goat cheese (or feta cheese)

For the Maple Vinaigrette:

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ tablespoons pure maple syrup

- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
 - 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
 - ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
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Instructions

1. Prepare and Roast the Squash (Time: 10 mins prep, 25-30 mins cook | Intensity: Medium)

- Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper for easy cleanup.
- In a large bowl, toss the butternut squash cubes with the olive oil, salt, black pepper, and smoked paprika (if using) until they are evenly coated.
- Spread the seasoned squash in a single, even layer on the prepared baking sheet. Be careful not to overcrowd the pan, as this will steam the squash instead of roasting it.
- Roast for 25-30 minutes, or until the squash is tender and the edges are beautifully caramelized and golden brown. Gently flip the cubes halfway through the roasting time to ensure even cooking.

- Remove from the oven and let cool on the baking sheet for 5-10 minutes.

2. Toast the Pecans (Time: 3-5 mins | Intensity: Low)

- While the squash is roasting, toast the pecans. You can do this in a dry skillet over medium-low heat for 3-5 minutes, stirring frequently, until they are fragrant and lightly toasted. Alternatively, place them on a small baking sheet and toast in the oven for the last 5-7 minutes of the squash's cooking time. Set aside to cool.

3. Whisk the Vinaigrette (Time: 5 mins | Intensity: Low)

- In a small bowl or a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the extra-virgin olive oil, maple syrup, apple cider vinegar, Dijon mustard, salt, and pepper.
- Whisk vigorously or shake the jar until the dressing is emulsified and smooth. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.

4. Assemble the Salad (Time: 5 mins | Intensity: Low)

- In a large salad bowl or on a serving platter, arrange the fresh arugula as the base.
- Scatter the warm roasted butternut squash over the arugula.
- Sprinkle the toasted pecans, dried cranberries, and crumbled goat cheese over the top.

- Drizzle the maple vinaigrette over the salad just before serving. Start with half the dressing and add more to your liking. Gently toss to combine, or serve the dressing on the side.
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Recipe Notes & Variations

- Make it a Main: Add grilled or shredded chicken, salmon, or chickpeas for a protein boost.
- Cheese Alternatives: If you're not a fan of goat cheese, try crumbled feta, shaved Parmesan, or a creamy burrata.
- Greens: Spinach or a mixed greens blend can be used in place of arugula for a milder flavor.
- Nut-Free: Omit the pecans or substitute with toasted pumpkin seeds (pepitas) for a nut-free crunch.
- Storage: The salad is best enjoyed fresh. However, you can store the components separately in the refrigerator. The roasted squash will last up to 4 days. Keep the dressing in a separate airtight container for up to a week. Assemble just before serving.
- Intensity Key:
 - Low: Minimal physical effort, mostly hands-off.

- Medium: Some active chopping, stirring, or monitoring required.
 - High: Requires constant attention, quick movements, or significant physical effort (e.g., kneading a stiff dough).
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Nutrition Information

Disclaimer: Nutritional information is an estimate and is provided for informational purposes only. It is calculated using an online nutrition calculator and may vary based on the exact ingredients and quantities used.

Per Serving (based on 4 side-dish servings):

- Calories: 370 kcal
- Total Fat: 24g
- Saturated Fat: 5g
- Cholesterol: 11mg
- Sodium: 480mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 38g

- Dietary Fiber: 6g
- Total Sugars: 18g
- Protein: 6g