

VENICE

FOUR SEASONS OF HOME COOKING

RUSSELL NORMAN

Author of *POLPO*



RIZZOLI
NEW YORK



ROASTED SQUASH *with* TOASTED SEEDS *and* SAGE

For 4

When nature, or the greengrocer, offers up great ingredients, it means you have to make less of an effort in the kitchen. As I am fond of saying, good Italian cooking is synonymous with good shopping.

An autumn stroll to Via Garibaldi got me more excited than usual one morning because the color of the vegetable barge had shifted slightly from the previous day, from green to orange. Yes, the squash had arrived.

All you need to do is soften them with heat and highlight their natural flavor with a few herbs and condiments, and nature takes care of the rest. Delicious on their own or with a raw radicchio salad.

1 butternut squash

1 acorn squash

extra virgin olive oil

flaky sea salt

chile flakes

ground cinnamon

freshly ground black pepper

a handful of sage leaves

Preheat the oven to 350°F/180°C. Remove and discard the hard stalks from the squash, cut the squash in half, and scoop out the seeds and set aside, discarding any stringy, pulpy bits from the seed cavity. You may need to wash and thoroughly dry the seeds. Peel away any hard, tough bits of skin but retain some areas where the skin is fine and delicate. Cut the squash into bite-size pieces.

Pour a few generous glugs of olive oil into a large roasting pan. Add the squash pieces, a good pinch of salt, a teaspoon of chile flakes, a scant teaspoon of cinnamon, and a good twist of black pepper. Roughly chop half the sage leaves and toss those in along with the remaining whole leaves. Use your hands to toss everything several times, making sure the squash is well coated. Cover tightly with foil and place in the oven. After 20 minutes or so, remove the foil, turn the oven up to 400°F/200°C and roast for an additional 12 to 15 minutes, until the squash is soft but golden and the edges are crisp.

While the squash is roasting, warm a frying pan over medium to high heat, add a splash of olive oil, and gently fry the retained seeds, shaking or stirring to turn frequently, until they have started to puff up slightly and turn golden brown.

Scatter the toasted seeds over the roasted squash and serve.