

Art of the Stilllife

Gourds, squash are composed, framed in their fall splendor

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Young, old, and every age in between, who hasn't walked into a fruit market in the weeks before Thanksgiving and been thoroughly delighted or repulsed by displays of squash and gourds?

Squash, which include pumpkins, make great dishes in a variety of recipes. Gourds are grown primarily for their ornamental value or to use to make utensils, dish cloths, and sponges.

Whoever labeled the warted gourd "decorative" must have a sense of humor. To the unappreciative eye, it looks gross.

Squash and gourds are colorful in varying hues of yellows, greens, orange, and pale and deep tones of gray.

One favorite is the pale yellow spaghetti squash.

Butternut squash has a warm Southwestern color. Buttercup squash with dark-green, tough-looking skin hardly make you think of buttercups, but they are sweet.

Yellowsummersquash is often gooseneck-shaped. Speaking of birds, winged gourds look like — what else? — birds.

Acorn squash might be green with a little orange and reddish orange. In some of the large fruits and vegetables, there might be recessed ridges with green such as the kakai pumpkins. Small ones might have green and yellow stripes.

A more interesting shaped squash is the turban. Indeed, they look like the turbans that people especially in African, Asian, and Middle Eastern nations wear. Crown squash are cute ones too, as they look just like itty-bitty crowns.

Say pumpkin and many of us think of big orange ones. But there are white, yellow, and orange mini pumpkins that you can hold in the palm of your hand. Large white ones — the lumina — allow youngsters who paint them to see the colors more easily than they could if they painted orange pumpkins.

Though there are many more squash, gourds, and pumpkins, heirloom pumpkins are good but might not be as visually appealing to everyone. A distinctive one from France that has warts and nodes is named for the French city of D'Eysines. Another, the jarrahdale pumpkin, doesn't appear to be tasty, but it is.

As they say, true beauty comes from within.

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