

## **Butternut Squash, Cranberry and Walnut Orzo Salad**

Butternut squash, nuts and dried cranberries welcome the fall with its colors and flavors. This makes a perfect side dish to a chicken dinner or better yet your Thanksgiving Turkey. It almost looks and tastes like a stuffing with a modern twist!

### **Ingredients**

1-pound Orzo, uncooked  
1 ½ pounds Butternut Squash, peeled, seeded and diced  
¾ cup very finely chopped red onion  
¾ cup finely chopped Italian Parsley, packed  
¾ cup Dried Cranberries  
¾ cup chopped toasted Walnuts  
5 ounces French Feta Cheese, crumbled  
½ cup + 2 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil  
1½ teaspoons Salt + additional (freshly ground sea salt optional for additional salt)  
½ teaspoon Black Pepper  
½ teaspoon White Pepper + additional  
5 tablespoons fresh Lemon Juice

### **Preparation**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees with rack in the center. Toss 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (plus additional if needed) with diced butternut squash in a large non-stick oven proof-baking tray. Spread to make one even layer. Lightly sprinkle with salt (fresh ground sea salt may be used here) and a dash of white pepper. Bake until tender, tossing occasionally, about 15-20 minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat, add a dash of salt and stir in orzo. Cook uncovered until the orzo is tender but firm to the bite, about 7-9 minutes. Drain the orzo with a strainer and rinse with cold water to stop from cooking. Transfer orzo into a large mixing bowl and immediately toss with ½ cup extra virgin olive oil. Set aside to cool completely.

Add cooled butternut squash, red onion, parsley, dried cranberries, toasted walnuts, 1 ½ teaspoons salt, ½ teaspoon black pepper ½ teaspoon white pepper, lemon juice and crumbled feta cheese to the cooled orzo. Gently toss and serve. May be refrigerated and served for later use.

Serves 8-10