

Radish seeds, meats and cheeses launched to space station

October 3 2020, by Marcia Dunn



Northrup Grumman's Antares rocket lifts off the launch pad at the NASA Wallops test flight facility, Friday, Oct. 2, 2020, in Wallops Island, Va. The rocket will deliver supplies to the International Space Station (Thom Baur/Northrup Grumman via AP)

A space station cargo ship rocketed into orbit Friday carrying a

360-degree camera for spacewalking, radish seeds for growing and a smorgasbord of fancy meats and cheeses for feasting.

Northrop Grumman launched its capsule to the International Space Station from the Virginia coast, providing a nighttime treat for observers from the Carolinas to New England, at least where skies were clear.

"It was a spectacular launch," said NASA's deputy [space station](#) program manager Kenny Todd. "Creating the artificial dawn for a few minutes there, it's just gorgeous."

The 8,000-pound (3,600-kilogram) shipment should reach the space station Monday.

Stashed aboard the Cygnus capsule: pressurized air tanks to help offset a vexing leak at the space station, a new \$23 million titanium toilet custom fit for women, and a virtual reality camera to provide cinematic views of spacewalks and other outdoor shots.

Plus there's more fresh food than usual, given that the space [station](#) population will be expanding from six to seven with SpaceX's second astronaut launch on Oct. 31.

Among the delicacies requested by the astronauts: prosciutto, Genoa salami, smoked Gouda and provolone, brie, cherry tomatoes, oranges, pecans and chocolate-covered cranberries in plenty of time for Thanksgiving.



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The astronauts also will get a chance to enjoy their own harvest. Researchers are hoping for 40 radishes from the seeds going up, within a month.

While growing radishes in orbit may sound trivial, "it is actually a transition from basic plant biology in space to a production system" that could benefit moon and Mars explorers, said Karl Hasenstein, a biology professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette who is leading the experiment.

Larger plants like peppers and tomatoes should follow in a few years, adding to astronauts' diet.

NASA's new toilet, meanwhile, will be tested at the orbiting outpost before accompanying astronauts to the moon in a few years. It will join two larger, old-style, Russian-built commodes already up there. The new one is designed to better accommodate women, who are expected to have an increasing presence in [space exploration](#).

This particular capsule, in fact, the SS Kalpana Chawla, is named after the first India-born woman in [space](#). Chawla was among the seven astronauts killed in the 2003 shuttle Columbia accident.



In this June 18, 2020 photo provided by NASA, astronaut Kate Rubins, center, and support personnel review the Universal Waste Management System, a low-

gravity space toilet, in Houston. The new device is scheduled to be delivered to the International Space Station on Oct. 1, 2020. (Norah Moran/NASA via AP)

The delivery is running a little late. Bad weather at Wallops Island led to a two-day delay earlier in the week, then software issues forced a last-minute launch abort of Northrop Grumman's Antares rocket on Thursday.

Barely a half hour later Friday night, NASA's other shipper, SpaceX, tried to launch a GPS satellite from Cape Canaveral, Florida, for the new U.S. Space Force. But the countdown was halted around the two-second mark.

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