

PUMPKIN



PUMPKIN is a winter squash like its relatives butternut and acorn squash. Familiar to many people as a symbol of Halloween and Thanksgiving, pumpkins mature in the summer months and are harvested in the fall. Pumpkins come in all shapes and sizes. The smaller ones are better for cooking, while some of the largest can reach enormous sizes like the 1096 pound pumpkin grown by NY state farmer Joe Pukos in the autumn of 2000!



STORAGE

- ◆ Store in a cool dark place that is well ventilated. Unbruised pumpkin will store for **2-3 months**.
- ◆ If the pumpkin is bruised it should be eaten right away to avoid spoilage.
- ◆ Pumpkin flesh (see preparation below) **freezes well**, packed in freezer bags or plastic containers.

PREPARATION

- ◆ Although frequently used as a holiday decoration, pumpkins can be prepared and eaten in many different ways.
- ◆ To prepare pumpkin flesh **for freezing or purees** (such as pie filling), cut the pumpkin in half and remove seeds (or place whole in the oven and bake until soft enough to cut in half). Remove seeds and fibers and set aside. Bake until pumpkin flesh is soft enough to be scooped from its skin.
- ◆ Pumpkin flesh can be **pureed** with butter and cinnamon, **made into pie, or added to soup**.
- ◆ Add chunks of raw or partially cooked pumpkin (skin and seeds removed) to soups, stew, stir-fries, roasts, etc.
- ◆ **To roast pumpkin seeds**, spread seeds (do not roast inner pumpkin pulp) in a layer on a greased cookie sheet. Sprinkle with salt or soy sauce. Bake at 350°F for 15-20 minutes, until golden brown and crisp, turning occasionally to make sure they don't burn. For a spicier variation, sprinkle cayenne pepper on roasted pumpkin seeds as they cool. Serve as a snack, or use to garnish salads.

Nutritional Information

Pumpkins are rich in vitamin A. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction.

Pumpkin Recipes

Roasted Pumpkin Soup with Black Pepper Croutons (Serves 4)

1 pumpkin (about 3 pounds), split and seeds scraped out
Olive oil
Salt and pepper
2 sprigs of thyme
4 cloves garlic
1 quart chicken or vegetable stock
4 slices crusty, good quality bread, such as sourdough
2 Tablespoons butter, melted



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spread oil over cut surfaces of pumpkin and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Place the pumpkin halves cut-side-down on a baking sheet with a sprig of thyme and 2 unpeeled cloves of garlic tucked underneath in the hollow cavity of each half. Roast in the oven for 45 minutes or until completely tender. When the pumpkin is cool enough to handle, scoop out the flesh (or peel off the skin) and put the flesh into a soup pot along with the peeled roasted garlic. Mash it all together and add stock. Heat until it is simmering. Taste and adjust the seasoning. For richer soup, add a little butter at this point. While the pumpkin is baking, make the croutons. Cut the bread into 1/2 inch cubes and toss them in the melted butter. Sprinkle salt on them, spread them on a baking sheet and roast in the oven at 300 degrees until they are brown and crisp. Generously grind black pepper over them as soon as you take them out of the oven.

Recipe reprinted with permission from Harper-Collins Publishers, from: *Chez Panisse Vegetables* by Alice Waters and the cooks of Chez Panisse, copyright 1996 by Harper-Collins Publishers.

Pumpkin Pie

1 1/2 cups cooked pumpkin
1 1/2 cups evaporated milk or cream
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
4 eggs, slightly beaten
One 9 inch pie crust
1 teaspoon vanilla



To prepare the pumpkin: cut in half and scrape out the seeds and pulp. Bake it in the oven at 350 degrees for an hour or until it is tender. Then scrape the flesh out of the rind and puree in a blender. In saucepan combine the pumpkin, evaporated milk or cream, sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger, cloves and eggs, set aside to cool. Carefully cook this mixture over medium heat until it gets thick. Be careful not to cook the eggs. Meanwhile put the pie crust into the hot oven until it gets slightly golden. Add the vanilla to the cooled pumpkin mixture. Pour the mixture into the golden pie crust and cool it. Serve with whipped cream if desired.

Recipe reprinted with permission from Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern from *FoodBook for a Sustainable Harvest*, by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern, copyright 1994 by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern.

Pumpkin Bread

Wet ingredients
1 cup pumpkin, cooked (see above)
2/3 cup brown sugar
2 eggs, lightly beaten
3 Tablespoons vegetable oil
1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

Dry ingredients
1 2/3 cup whole wheat (or all purpose flour)
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon each of ground cloves, allspice, nutmeg
1/2 cup raisins or chocolate chips (optional)
1/3 cup chopped walnuts (optional)



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a nonstick loaf pan with cooking spray (or lightly grease it with butter.) In medium a bowl, combine all wet ingredients. In a large bowl, combine all of dry ingredients. Gradually add wet mixture to the dry and blend well, but do not over mix. Stir in the raisins, chocolate chips or walnuts if desired. Pour the batter into the greased loaf pan and cook for 50 to 55 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Allow to cool before cutting.

Recipe contributed by Adrienne Maher, Just Food dietetic intern, 2001