Add Some Pumpkin and Squash to Your Menu

What recipes do you think of when you hear the words pumpkin or squash? Are you thinking of pumpkin pie or pumpkin bread? Pumpkin and squash can be used in many ways on our menu.

Did you know that most canned “pumpkin” is actually squash? Pumpkin and squash are in the same plant family, and their taste and nutritional value are almost the same. They are good sources of fiber to help our digestion. Pumpkin and squash are rich in pigments (called carotenoids) that our body converts to vitamin A. We need vitamin A for healthy eyes and skin.

Try a variety of winter squash, including butternut, buttercup, acorn, hubbard or spaghetti squash, with these tips.

Store it correctly.
• Store pumpkin and squash in a cool, dry place. Do not wash it before storing because that can shorten its storage life. When stored correctly, it can last several months.

Bake it.
• To bake a pumpkin or squash, rinse the squash with running water and scrub with a vegetable brush if needed. Poke holes in the skin with a knife.
• Place it in a baking pan and bake at 350 F until tender. Bake small squash/pumpkin for about 45 minutes or large squash for about 90 minutes.
• Remove the skin and seeds, then mash, season as desired and serve.

Microwave it.
• Rinse the squash and cut it into chunks. Place in a microwave-safe container and cook on high for about seven minutes until tender. Note: Raw squash and pumpkin are very hard; be cautious when cutting it to avoid injuring yourself.

Freeze it.
• Cooked, mashed squash can be preserved by freezing but not by home-canning. Chunks of cooked squash can be preserved by pressure canning. Visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and follow the directions for safe food preservation.

Try some new recipes.
• Have you ever made pumpkin pancakes or pumpkin fruit leather? How about pumpkin or squash soup or pumpkin bread pudding? See www.ag.ndsu.edu/food for recipes to try. Click on “Recipes,” then “Breads” or “Snacks, Appetizers and Beverages.”
I am serving Thanksgiving dinner, and several people in my family are trying to cut down on calories. Do you have any tips?

Here are several ideas that may work for you.

- Begin with a veggie tray filled with colorful pepper slices, grape tomatoes, carrot sticks, etc. You might want to arrange them to look like a turkey. Serve with a reduced-calorie dip if desired.
- Use lower-calorie ingredients such as “light sour cream” or “light cream cheese” when making dips, mashed potatoes or salads. Compare the Nutrition Facts labels.
- Instead of green bean casserole, stir-fry green beans in olive oil with some sliced pecans and a dash of cayenne pepper.
- Go easy on the brown sugar and butter added to sweet potatoes.
- Remove the skin from the roasted turkey before serving and/or eating. Turkey skin is high in fat and calories.
- Serve ice water with the meal. If desired, flavor the water with some orange, lemon or lime slices.
- Serve pumpkin pie instead of higher-calorie apple pie or pecan pie.
- Use smaller serving spoons. People tend to serve themselves larger portions when larger utensils are used.

These tasty muffins can be assembled in minutes, and your guests will think you spent a lot of time measuring and mixing.

### 2-Ingredient Pumpkin Spice Muffins

- 1 (15-ounce) spice cake mix
- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin (not pumpkin pie mix)
- Optional topping: ½ tsp. sugar per muffin

Preheat oven to 350 F. Place ingredients in a bowl and mix thoroughly with an electric mixer for about two minutes or beat by hand. Grease or spray muffin tin cups or use paper liners. Fill each muffin cup about two-thirds full. The batter is thick, so use a knife to smooth the top of the batter. If desired, sprinkle the top of each muffin with ½ teaspoon of sugar. Bake for 18 to 22 minutes, until a knife or toothpick comes out clean.

Makes 18 servings (one muffin each). Each serving has 110 calories, 3 grams (g) fat, 2 g protein, 19 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 160 milligrams sodium.

**FoodWi$e Tip of the Month**

Roast squash or pumpkin seeds. After baking or cooking a squash or pumpkin, remove the seeds and rinse them with water and pat dry with a paper towel. Preheat oven to 300 F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil (for easy cleanup). Place the seeds in a bowl, add a small amount of oil and stir. Sprinkle with seasoning salt, Cajun spice or your favorite spice. Bake for about 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes, until the seeds are golden brown.

### Just for Fun

Why did they let the turkey join the band? Because he had the drumsticks!

Happy Thanksgiving!

**Breakfast Menu Idea**

- Scrambled eggs with onion and green pepper
- Pumpkin Spice Muffins
- Vanilla yogurt layered with strawberries or blueberries*
- Low-fat milk, 100 percent orange juice or coffee

* Using frozen berries saves money.

Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist

Contact the local office of the NDSU Extension Service for more information on food and nutrition or managing your food dollar.