



Pumpkins!

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Pumpkins are one of the colorful symbols of autumn. Most people think of using them solely for the purpose of carving and displaying, but pumpkin can be used in many ways on your menu, including soups and desserts. Try roasting the seeds for a crunchy snack.

Growing

In the northern states, the easiest pumpkin variety to grow is 'Neon.' This variety starts out orange and grows larger with time. The vines spread about 8 feet across, so they will not overrun your garden. 'Neon' pumpkins are the perfect size for jack-o-lanterns. They grow to be about 10 inches across and weigh about 8 pounds. If you want a larger pumpkin, try 'Dakota Howden.' These pumpkins grow to about 15 pounds and are a great orange color. Sugar pumpkins often are used in recipes. They are smaller and less stringy.

Remember to water your pumpkins. Every year, pumpkin patches should be rotated in the garden to prevent diseases. Never plant them in the same spot two years in a row.

See www.ag.ndsu.edu/horticulture for more information about growing a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Preparation

To bake pumpkin, rinse the pumpkin under running water, then cut it in half, discarding the stem and stringy pulp. Save the seeds for roasting if desired. Spray a shallow baking sheet with cooking spray, and place both halves face down on the sheet and cover with foil. Bake at 375 F for about 1½ hours or until tender. Smaller pieces will cook faster. After the pumpkin has cooled, you can scoop out the flesh and mash, chop or puree it for use in recipes. You also can freeze the pulp in recipe-sized amounts for later use.

Preservation

Freezing: Freezing is the easiest way to preserve pumpkins. Wash, cut into chunks and remove seeds. Cook until soft in boiling water or bake in an oven, as described earlier. Remove the pulp and mash. Package cooked pumpkin in recipe-sized amounts in freezer containers or bags labeled with the contents and date. Leave ½-inch head space. Seal and freeze.

Canning: Pumpkin chunks may be canned in a pressure canner, but for safety reasons, you should not can mashed pumpkin. Peel the cooked pumpkin and cut it into small cubes.

Follow current pressure-canning procedures for canning pumpkin in the NDSU Extension Service publication "Home Canning Low-acid Vegetables" (FN173).

Nutrition

Pumpkin is low in calories. One-half cup of mashed pumpkin (without salt) has 24 calories, 0 grams (g) fat, 1 g protein, 6 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 1 milligrams sodium. Pumpkins are packed with nutrients, such as fiber and beta-carotene. Our bodies use beta carotene to produce vitamin A. Pumpkins are also rich in potassium.



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Recipes

Key to abbreviations

c. = cup

tsp. = teaspoon

Tbsp. = tablespoon

oz. = ounce

g = gram

mg = milligram



Cinnamon and Sugar Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

- 1 c. pumpkin seeds
- 1 Tbsp. melted butter (or substitute cooking oil)
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. nutmeg
- dash of salt

Preheat oven to 300 F. Toss seeds with melted butter or oil. Mix dry ingredients and sprinkle over seeds; toss. Line a well-greased baking sheet with seed mixture and bake for approximately 50 minutes. Stir and mix the seeds often to keep them from burning and sticking. Bake until browned.

Makes eight (2 tablespoon) servings. Each serving has 170 calories, 14 g fat, 7 g protein, 7 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 5 mg sodium.



Pumpkin Pie Oatmeal

- 2 c. quick-cooking oats
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ c. milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. cooked pumpkin (canned or fresh)
- 1 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- Pinch of salt
- Optional toppings (chopped walnuts, butterscotch or white chocolate chips, whipped topping)

In a microwave-safe bowl, whisk together all of the ingredients except for the optional toppings. Microwave on high for approximately two minutes, or until oatmeal reaches the desired consistency. For thinner oatmeal, add more milk; for thicker, add less milk. Allow to stand approximately one minute and serve hot. Top with desired toppings.

Makes four servings. Each serving (before optional toppings) has 210 calories, 4 g fat, 7 g protein, 37 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber and 60 mg sodium.

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