Not just for pie

WINTER SQUASH OFFERS RICH TASTE PACKED WITH NUTRIENTS

BY ERIKA ENIGK

As the weather cools and the holiday season approaches, warm, rich comfort foods are on every menu. And nothing makes a tastier fall dish than pumpkin and other winter squash.

But enjoying a filling, satisfying meal doesn’t have to mean fattening up for winter; these foods pack a nutritional punch with a surprisingly low calorie count.

Pumpkins and squash such as acorn, butternut and spaghetti are rich in beta carotene, Vitamin E, iron and potassium. These valuable nutrients are difficult to come by in the American diet, said Joan Salge Blake, a registered dietician and clinical associate professor at Boston University. They offer protection against heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes and provide a good source of fiber.

Plus, these thick, rich foods taste much more fattening than they are — one cup of pumpkin is only 80 calories.

“They’re unbelievably nutrient-rich,” Salge Blake said. “You’re going to outsmart your stomach.”

ROASTED ACORN SQUASH AND SWEET POTATO SOUP

2 large onions, peeled and quartered
2 large apples with skin, cored and quartered
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into chunks
1 acorn squash, peeled, halved, seeds removed
2 tablespoons honey
2 ten-ounce cans reduced-sodium chicken broth
2 cups water
2 tablespoon curry

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Spray shallow pan with vegetable oil spray and place vegetables on pan. Drizzle with honey. Roast for 40 to 45 minutes.

When vegetables are tender, puree a small amount along with the pan drippings and remaining broth into a blender or food processor. Scoop pureed vegetables into a large pot. Continue in small batches until all of the roasted vegetables are pureed.

Add the remaining broth, water, and curry to pot. Blend and simmer for 20 minutes. You may want to add more water if soup is too thick. Serve immediately.

PUMPKIN DATE MUFFINS

1 cup bran cereal (nugget-type)
1 cup apple juice
1 1/2 cups whole-wheat flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
1/4 cup chopped walnuts
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 egg whites
1 cup canned pumpkin
1 cup chopped dates

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a small mixing bowl, combine bran cereal and apple juice. Let stand.

In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, brown sugar, pumpkin pie spice and walnuts. Stir to blend. Add oil, egg whites, and pumpkin to cereal mixture. Stir until well blended. Add cereal mixture to large mixing bowl. Stir until just blended. Add dates and stir.

Spoon mixture into 12 muffin tins that have been coated with vegetable-oil spray. Bake for 18 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center is clean when removed.

STUFFED SWEET POTATOES

1 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes, washed
2 ounces apple juice
3 teaspoons margarine, melted
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. With a fork, prick holes in sweet potatoes and bake for 45 to 60 minutes or until tender. Remove from oven and cool slightly for better handling.

Once cooled, slice each potato in half diagonally. Scoop out most of the potato, leaving approximately 1/4 inch around skin.

Put potatoes in mixing bowl along with apple juice, sugar, 2 teaspoons margarine, and nutmeg. Whip until smooth.

Sprinkle potatoes evenly with walnuts. Stir to blend. Add oil, egg whites, and pumpkin to cereal mixture. Stir until well blended. Add cereal mixture to large mixing bowl. Stir until just blended. Add dates and stir.

Spoon mixture into 12 muffin tins that have been coated with vegetable-oil spray. Bake for 18 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center is clean when removed.

HARVEST BAKED SQUASH

2 tablespoons light margarine
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
2 tablespoons maple syrup
4 tablespoons apple juice
4 tablespoons dates
2 tablespoons golden raisins
2 acorn squash (about 24 ounces)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Wash squash. Cut in half width-wise and spoon out centers. Cut the stem off so that each squash half will stand upright.

Pour a cup of water in a large baking dish. Place the four squash halves upright in baking dish. Set aside.

In nonstick fry pan, add remaining margarine and sauté walnuts, about two to three minutes. Remove pan from heat and add remaining ingredients. Spoon evenly into center of squash.

Bake for 35 to 40 minutes in covered dish or until each squash is tender when poked with a fork. Remove from oven. Using a spoon, drizzle a tablespoon of liquid from the center of the squash on the top.

Place under broiler and broil for approximately two to three minutes until golden.

Recipes courtesy Joan Salge Blake

CARROTS, ORANGE SQUASH COOKING WITH BUTTER NUT CARROTS, ORANGE SQUASH COOKING WITH BUTTER NUT