

Autumn is the perfect time to enjoy winter squash – the ones with the hard shell that can't be easily punctured by your fingernail. There are MANY varieties of squash that may be enjoyed in so many ways. This month we'll explore a main dish with spaghetti squash, a side with butternut and a dessert with pumpkin. Enjoy! Jan Temple

WINTER SQUASH



Fall is the time of year to harvest winter squash. Winter squash has a long storage life and may be kept for as long as three months at home. That's even

better news when you realize how nutrient rich and economical these squash can be. Depending on the variety you choose, a 1/2 cup serving of cooked winter squash may provide almost 100% of the RDA for Vitamin A for an entire day for women.

Choose squash with a dry, smooth rind with no cracks or soft spots. You want the rind to be dull; a shiny rind may indicate that the squash was harvested too early and may not have the full sweetness of a mature squash. When possible, choose squash with a dry stem attached. When buying a cut squash, look for good inside color and fine-grained flesh.

You may store squash for three months or longer in a cool, dry place. Storage in the refrigerator will shorten the life of the squash by encouraging deterioration unless you are planning to keep it for only a week or two. Cut squash may be kept in the refrigerator for up to one week if wrapped tightly.

Preparation of squash is quite simple. Many varieties include stickers with easy to use directions. Begin by washing off any dirt. The next step is usually to cut it, but the rind can be so hard that you may want to try this tip. Put the clean squash in the microwave for



1-3 minutes on full power. For this short of time, it is not necessary to prick or poke the squash and it will not explode, but it will soften just a little so that it will be easier to cut. It will be hot when you remove it from the microwave so remember to use potholders. Then make a shallow cut to use as a guide for the knife. Place the blade in the cut and tap on the base of the knife with your fist. After you have cut the squash through, scoop out the seeds. Finish cooking in the microwave or conventional oven.

SPAGHETTI SQUASH PARMESAN — 4- SERVINGS

1 spaghetti squash	1 tsp. dried Italian seasoning
10 oz. pkg. frozen chopped spinach	1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 Cup nonfat ricotta cheese	2 Cups low-sodium pasta sauce
1/2 Cup plain bread crumbs	1/4 Cup Parmesan cheese

Cut squash in half and remove seeds and pulp. Invert on a microwave dish or platter and microwave until tender, about 10-15 minutes. Let cool. Using a fork, remove the strands of squash from its shell. Lightly spray a 9x13 inch pan with nonstick cooking spray. Arrange the squash on the bottom of the pan. Thaw spinach and drain well, pressing out excess liquid. In a bowl, combine the spinach, ricotta cheese, bread crumbs, and seasonings. Mix until blended. Spread over squash. Top with pasta sauce and sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-40 minutes or until heated through. Allow to sit for 5 minutes before cutting and serving. This dish goes well with salad and bread for a light dinner.



Each 1 cup serving: 260 calories, 1 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 420 mg sodium, 36 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 25 g protein. **Cost:** \$1.60 per serving.

Source: *Communicating Food for Health*

OATMEAL-PUMPKIN COOKIES 90 SMALL COOKIES

1 3/4 Cups pumpkin puree	2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 1/2 Cups brown sugar	1 teaspoon nutmeg
2 eggs	1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 Cup vegetable oil	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 Cups All-purpose flour	1 Cup raisins or cranraisins
2 1/2 Cups Quick Oats, dry	1 Cup walnuts, chopped (optional)
1 Tablespoon baking powder	

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix pumpkin, brown sugar, eggs, and oil thoroughly. Blend dry ingredients and add to pumpkin mixture. Add raisins and nuts, if desired. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake 10-12 minutes until golden brown.

Alternate spices: Reduce cinnamon to 1 1/2 tsp and use 1 1/2 tsp. Pumpkin Pie Spice instead of nutmeg and ginger.

Each serving: 44 calories, 1.5 g fat, 0.2 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 4.7 mg cholesterol, 24 mg sodium, 7.2 g carbohydrate, 0.5 g fiber, 0.7 g protein.

Cost: \$.04 per cookie with raisins; no nuts; \$.05 per cookie with nuts and cranraisins

Source: *Adapted from Oregon State University Extension*



PUMPKIN SOLUTIONS

In the Midwest, some shoppers are finding it easier to locate 2-pound cans of pumpkin as opposed to 1 pound cans. If you need ideas for how to use the leftover pumpkin, look in the archives of the Food for Fitness and Fun Newsletter. In almost every October issue you will find recipes using canned pumpkin. www.extension.iastate.edu/food



SOUP – CHECK THE NUMBERS

Real life examples of food packages often give great learning lessons to focus on the numbers that really matter – the back of the box or can rather than marketing hype. Saturated fat, sodium and calorie density are what is really important for the big picture of a healthful diet. With cooler weather upon us, soup is the focus of this article.

Campbell's line of Chunky soups now boasts:

- 23 soups that have a full serving of vegetables and 100 percent lean meat
- More than 30 soups that have a full serving of vegetables
- More than 30 soups that have 100 percent lean meat
- More than 30 soups that are a good source of protein

Food and Health Communications, a company providing resources for nutrition education, agrees that using more veggies and lean meat is a great idea for soup. But they question the sodium. The sodium content for the Chunky Healthy Request Beef and Vegetable Soup is 480 mg per cup for 120 calories. That's a ration of 4 mg of sodium per 1 calorie. A lower ratio is certainly better.

Regular Beef with Country Vegetables Chunky Soup has 890 mg of sodium per cup and the calories and fat are

Choice matters!				
Serving size	1 Can	1 Can	1 Cup	1 Cup
Calories	240	160	120	140
Fat (g)	4	4.5	2	2.5
Sodium (mg)	30	30	480	890

not that different. Fifty percent less sodium is good, but not good enough for us to buy it, says Food and Health Communications. If you have the right ingredients on hand, it takes little time to throw them in a pot to make soup without salt, and not that much more than to open a can and heat it up.

To be fair, Food and Health Communications says, Campbell's does make a low-sodium variety of soups. Their choices would be *Chicken with Noodles Soup* that has just 160 calories, 4.5 g fat, 1.5 g saturated fat and 140 mg sodium per can; *Chunky Split Pea Soup* has 240 calories, 4 g fat, and 30 mg sodium per can; *Chunky Tomato with Tomato Pieces Soup* has 150 calories, 4 g fat, 1.5 g saturated fat and 90 mg sodium per can.

To compare your favorite choices, visit www.campbellsoup.com Click on Nutrition and Wellness and then Product Nutrition in the top bar. It is easy to find nutrition information on their products.

Eating out usually does not bring better results. Panera Bread lists chicken noodle soup at 1350 mg sodium per serving and garden vegetable at 1900 mg sodium per serving. Food and Health Communications wonders if most restaurants would change their tune if they had to list sodium on the menu!

Source: Food and Health Communications, September 2009

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP – SERVES 6

This soup goes great with a sandwich.

1 Tablespoon olive oil	1 pinch nutmeg
1 Cup diced onion	Ground pepper, to taste
1 Tablespoon minced garlic	4 Cups low-sodium chicken broth
2 Cups mashed butternut squash, fresh* or frozen	1 Tablespoon thinly sliced green onions
1 bay leaf	

Sauté onion and garlic in a large pan until golden, about 1-2 minutes. Add the squash, seasonings and broth. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cook for 10 minutes. Remove bay leaf and serve with sliced green onion on top.



*To cook fresh butternut squash, wash with cold running water.

One pound fresh squash yield about 1 cup mashed. Microwave whole squash on full power for two minutes to soften rind for easier cutting. Cut squash and remove seeds. Arrange halves or chunks cut side up in a shallow microwave safe dish. Add 2 tablespoons water, cover and microwave on full power for 7 to 10 minutes. Cooking time will vary with squash size and microwave power. Cook until tender; let stand for 5 minutes after cooking.

Each 1 1/4 cup serving: 143 calories, 3 g fat, <1 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 16 mg cholesterol, 265 mg sodium, 25 g carbohydrate, 6 g protein, 3 g fiber. Cost: \$.80 per serving.

Source: Communicating Food for Health, September 2009

HEALTHY MEALS IN A HURRY, PM 2035

For more information about reducing sodium in your everyday cooking, check out "Healthy Meals in a Hurry" (PM 2035). It's available for \$2.50 each from your County ISU Extension Office and Extension's online store at www.extension.iastate.edu/store.

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