

SENIOR NUTRITION NEWS



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Eat Smart Idaho

Picking the Perfect Pumpkin

Fall is pumpkin season. Pumpkins are a healthy addition to many recipes.

Pumpkin selection

Different pumpkin varieties are grown for different uses. Carving pumpkins typically contain too much moisture to be tasty when cooked. Cooking pumpkins are more dense and fleshy. Good varieties of pumpkins for cooking include Small Sugar, Baby Pam, and French Heirloom.



Whatever the use, look for a pumpkin that sits flat, is free of bruises, is nice and round and has a deep, pretty orange color. The stem, also known as the handle is important. It should be dark green, indicating the pumpkin is fresh and hasn't been stored for too long. You shouldn't pick a pumpkin up by the handle. This can damage it, and shorten its life.

Pumpkin health benefits

- Great source of vitamin A (plays an important role in vision and skin health)
- Rich in antioxidants (help give your body a strong defense against disease)
- Fat free and cholesterol free (heart healthy)
- Good source of vitamin C (aids in healthy immune system)
- Fiber (heart healthy and intestinal benefits)

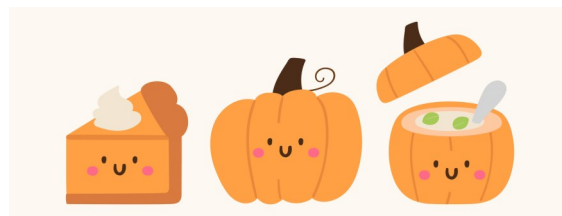
Pumpkin puree

To make your own pumpkin puree, first choose a small, firm pumpkin for cooking which seems heavy for its size. You only need a 2 ½ to 3 pound pumpkin to have enough flesh for a couple of pies. Preheat oven to 325°. Cut pumpkin in half, stem to base. Remove all the seeds and pulp. Cover each half with foil and bake for 1 hr. Scrape meat from the halves and puree. Strain to remove stringy pieces.



Pumpkins are also delicious, versatile and nutritious! Try these tips with your leftover pumpkin:

Pumpkin Smoothie: Mix together pumpkin, fat-free milk, frozen vanilla yogurt and a dash of pumpkin spice or cinnamon in a blender and enjoy!



Pumpkin Pizza: Saute pumpkin and other favorite veggies, then place on a whole wheat pizza crust drizzled with olive oil and your favorite spices.

Pumpkin Oatmeal: Add fresh, cooked or canned pumpkin to your morning oatmeal.

Pumpkin Muffins: Add fresh, cooked or canned pumpkin to your favorite muffin batter.

Pumpkin Soup: Cook mashed pumpkin with chicken broth, fat-free half-and-half, nutmeg, onion and other spices.

Pumpkin Pancakes: Add fresh cooked or canned pumpkin to your favorite pancake batter.

Pumpkin Seeds: Rinse seeds to remove pulp and strings. Spread seeds on a baking sheet that has been coated with cooking spray or drizzle a small amount of olive oil over seeds. Bake at 325°F for about 30 minutes or until lightly toasted. Stir occasionally during cooking. Take a look at your spice rack and try sprinkling some garlic powder or Cajun seasoning on toasted seeds.

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