

Wise Notes for Consumers

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Pumpkin Time

During October and even November, pumpkins seem to be a staple: pumpkin patches, jack-o'-lanterns, and pumpkin pie. With all that pumpkin, what else can you do with it? You can make your own pumpkin puree!

We usually think of using the pumpkin for pie but there are many other recipes with pumpkin that are great this time of year and also serve as an excellent source of nutrients. The bright orange color of pumpkin is a dead giveaway that pumpkin is loaded with an important antioxidant, beta-carotene that offers protection against heart disease.

In order to prepare the pumpkin for use in recipes, first work on a clean surface. Before cutting, wash the outer surface of the pumpkin thoroughly with cool tap water to remove any surface dirt that could be transferred to the inside of the pumpkin during cutting.

Pie pumpkins are easier to work with, smaller, have a sweeter taste, and contain more flesh than carving pumpkins. Start by removing the stem with a sharp knife. Next, cut in half. In any case, remove the stem and scoop out the seeds and scrape away all of the stringy mass. It's a messy job, but it will pay off. The pumpkin should be cooked in one of three ways, boiled, baked in oven, or microwave.

With the Boiling/Steaming Method: Cut the pumpkin into rather large chunks. Rinse in cold water. Place pieces in a large pot with about a cup of water. The water does not need to cover the pumpkin pieces. Cover the pot and boil 20 to 30 minutes or until tender, or steam 10 to 12 minutes. Check for doneness by poking with a fork. Drain the cooked pumpkin in a colander.

With the Oven Method: Cut pumpkin in half, scraping away stringy mass and seeds. Rinse

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under cold water. Place pumpkin; cut side down on a large cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F for one hour or until fork tender.

If you choose the Microwave Method: Cut pumpkin in half, place cut side down on a microwave safe plate or tray. Microwave on high for 15 minutes, check for doneness. If necessary continue cooking at 1-2 minute intervals until fork tender.

When the pumpkin is cool enough to handle, remove the peel using a small sharp knife and your fingers. Put the peeled pumpkin in a food processor and puree or use a food mill, strainer or potato masher to form a puree. Don't let your cooked pumpkin set at room temperature longer than two hours in the process of making puree.

Next the puree will be ready to try in this Pumpkin Brownie recipe from the Eat Smart, Move More program.

Pumpkin Brownies

1 cup pumpkin puree, canned or cooked	1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
½ tsp salt	2 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp nutmeg	¼ cup vegetable oil
1 egg	1 egg white
½ cup walnuts, finely chopped	1 ¼ cup whole wheat flour
1 tsp baking powder	½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp ground ginger	¼ cup buttermilk
2 tsp vanilla extract	

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°.
2. Coat a 9 x 13 baking pan with cooking spray.
3. Combine all ingredients and beat well.
4. Pour into pan.
5. Bake for 30 – 40 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean (ovens may vary, check at 20 minutes).
6. Cool and cut into squares.

Nutrition Information Makes 24 brownies per brownie:

Calories: 100 Fat: 4.5g Carbohydrate: 15g Protein: 2g Fiber: 1g Sodium: 80mg

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