



Nourish

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Let's Celebrate Pumpkin Nutrition!

At this time of year, pumpkins often show up on doorsteps as decorations, but they also deserve a spot on our plates.

Pumpkin pie spice remains an ongoing autumn food trend. However, having some actual pumpkin with a sprinkle of your favorite spice would be better for your health than some of the high-fat and high-calorie options enticing us in restaurants and grocery stores.

Pumpkins, squash and gourds are part of the family known as Cucurbita. In fact, pumpkins and gourds are types of squash.

Botanically, pumpkins and squash are fruits because they contain seeds, but in nutrition, we treat them as vegetables.

Are you confused yet? Regardless of how you categorize them, enjoy more pumpkin and squash.

Most of us do not eat enough dark orange and gold vegetables. Pumpkin and squash are good sources of fiber to help our digestion. These orange-fleshed fruits of the plant are rich in pigments (called carotenoids) that our body converts to vitamin A. We need vitamin A for healthy eyes and skin.

Add More Pumpkin to Your Menu

Pumpkin and winter squash have a long shelf life. Try a variety of winter squash, including butternut, buttercup, acorn, hubbard or spaghetti squash, with these tips:

- **Store it.** Store pumpkin and squash in a cool, dry place. Do not wash it before storing because that can shorten its storage life. When stored correctly, it can last several months.
- **Bake it.** To bake a pumpkin or squash, rinse it with running water and scrub with a vegetable brush if needed. Poke holes in the skin with a knife. Place it in a baking pan and bake at 350 F until tender. Bake small squash/pumpkin for about 45 minutes or large squash for about 90 minutes. Remove the skin and seeds, then mash, season as desired and serve.
- **Microwave it.** Rinse the squash and cut it into chunks. Place in a microwave-safe container and cook on high for about seven minutes until tender.
- **Freeze it.** Cooked, mashed squash can be preserved by freezing, but not by home-canning. Chunks of cooked squash can be preserved by pressure canning. Visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and follow the directions for safe food preservation.
Note: Raw squash and pumpkin are very hard; be cautious when cutting it to avoid injuring yourself.
- **See www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork** and explore the resources, including winter squash.



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Question

What is “pumpkin spice,” anyway? Can I make it at home?

This blend of spices goes into pumpkin pie, pumpkin bars and, apparently, almost any kind of food in the fall. We can enjoy pumpkin spice coffee creamer, coffee drinks, yogurt, pancake mix, cookie straws, candy bars, granola bars, cereal, ice cream, flavored almonds, toaster pastries and dozens more seasonal products available in some locations.

If you have a variety of spices in your cupboard, you can make your own pumpkin spice with these proportions: 1 part cinnamon (1 teaspoon) to 1/4 part nutmeg (¼ teaspoon) to ¼ part ground ginger (¼ teaspoon) to ⅓ part ground cloves (⅓ teaspoon). You can scale up the recipe and fill your own spice containers with this autumn mix.



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Try cooking some fresh pumpkin and blend with these savory ingredients to make a delicious soup to pair with crusty bread.



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Savory Pumpkin Soup

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium red onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons chopped sage (~10 leaves)
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie filling) or 2 cups cooked, mashed pumpkin
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can navy beans*
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ teaspoon pepper
- Dried cranberries, pomegranate seeds and/or sage for garnish (optional)

In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, until translucent. Add garlic and sage, and cook for another minute. Add vegetable broth, pumpkin, beans, turmeric, nutmeg, salt, and pepper, and stir to combine. Bring to a simmer. Allow the soup to cool before transferring in small portions to a blender to puree. You may use an immersion blender too. Transfer the soup back into the pot and let cook on medium-low heat for 5 to 10 minutes. Add additional salt and pepper to taste. Garnish as desired.

*Adding additional beans and pumpkin will change the consistency. If a thicker consistency is desired, add more beans and pumpkin.

Makes six servings. Each serving has 130 calories, 2.5 g fat, 5 g protein, 21 g carbohydrates, 6 g fiber, and 300 mg sodium.