



Get to know: Pumpkin

A pumpkin is a type of winter squash of the genus *Cucurbita* that is round with smooth, slightly ribbed skin. Pumpkins are most commonly deep yellow or orange in colour, but many other colour variations exist, including white and green. Pumpkins, like other squash, originated in North America. Pumpkin seeds dating to as early as 7 000 BC have been found in Mexico. Nearly every part of the pumpkin is edible, from the seeds to the skin to the flowers.



Nutrition

One cup (245g) of cooked pumpkin has 49 calories, 12g of carbohydrates, 3g of fibre, and 2g of protein. The 3g of fibre per serving is ideal to keep you feeling full while consuming less calories. A fibre rich diet has been shown to lead to people consuming less calories, so fibre rich foods such as pumpkin are perfect for those trying to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight.

Fun Facts

The largest pumpkins ever recorded weigh over 1 000kg. In comparison, typical pumpkins range from 2.7 to 8.2kg. Pumpkin chucking or “Punkin Chunkin” is a popular competition in certain areas of the United States where pumpkins are grown. Competitors try to propel a pumpkin farther than their rivals using mechanical devices such as slingshots, catapults, trebuchets, and air cannons. The World Championship Punkin Chunkin (WCPC) is the biggest such competition, attracting dozens of teams, tens of thousands of spectators, and national TV coverage. The WCPC record is held by a team which used an air cannon to propel their pumpkin 1,431 meters in 2013.

Health Benefits

Gem squash is low in Saturated Fat and Sodium, and very low in Cholesterol. A cup of cooked pumpkin contains more than 200 percent of the recommended daily intake of Vitamin A, which is excellent for vision. That same serving of cooked pumpkin also contains about 20% of daily recommended Vitamin C, which is thought to bolster the immune system. Pumpkin seeds are rich in phytosterols, which reduce bad cholesterol. Pumpkin is also a very good source of dietary fibre, riboflavin, potassium, copper, and manganese.

source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pumpkin, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cucurbita_maxima,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pumpkin_chucking, nutritiondata.self.com,
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/04/pumpkin-health-benefits_n_1936919.html
<http://www.sheknows.com>

What you can try with pumpkin:

Roasted Pumpkin Salad

by: 101 Cookbooks

Serves: 4

What You Need:

- 3 cups of pumpkin, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Sea salt
- 12 tiny red onions or shallots, peeled (OR 3 medium red onions peeled and quartered)
- 2 cups cooked wild rice

Dressing:

- 1/3 cup sunflower seeds
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoons warm water
- 1/2 cup cilantro (optional)

What to do:

1. Preheat the oven to 190. Toss the pumpkin in a generous splash of olive oil along with a couple pinches of salt, and turn out onto a baking sheet. At the same time, toss the onions with a bit of olive oil, sprinkle with salt, and turn out onto a separate baking sheet. Roast both for about 45 minutes, or until squash is brown and caramelized. The same goes for the onions, they should be deeply colored, caramelized, and soft throughout by the time they are done roasting. You'll need to flip both the squash and onion pieces once or twice along the way - so it's not just one side that is browning.
2. In the meantime, make the dressing. With a hand blender or food processor puree the sunflower seeds, olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and honey until creamy. You may need to add a few tablespoons of warm water to thin the dressing a bit. Stir in the cilantro, saving just a bit to garnish the final plate later. Taste and adjust seasonings (or flavors) to your liking - I usually need to add a touch more salt with this dressing.
3. In a large bowl, toss the wild rice with a large dollop of the dressing. Add the onions, gently toss just once or twice. Turn the rice and onions out onto a platter and top with the roasted squash (I'll very gently toss with my hands here to disperse the pumpkin a bit). Finish with another drizzle of dressing and any remaining chopped cilantro.

<http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/roasted-pumpkin-salad-recipe.html>

Try these other recipes

- Pumpkin bread: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/alton-brown/pumpkin-bread-recipe.html>
- Pumpkin fritters: <http://tastyrecipes.sapeople.com/pumpkin-fritters/>
- Oven baked pumpkin fries: <http://www.ohbiteit.com/2014/09/oven-baked-pumpkin-fries-2.html>

