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# Family Matters

*Improving Health Together*

## October 2018 Newsletter

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## Pumpkins...the Magic of Fall

*Glenda Wentworth, Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent, Eagle County*

With the arrival of the beautiful fall colors and brisk nights, the sight of pumpkins decorating our homes is common. Capturing the magic of fall are those familiar orange pumpkins carved into Jack-o'-lanterns lighting the paths for trick-or-treaters.



We usually associate pumpkins with decorations and the carving of Jack-o-lanterns; but **what about cooking pumpkins?**

Select smaller **pie pumpkins for cooking and baking** rather than the traditional carving pumpkins. The pie pumpkin's flesh is sweeter and less watery which suits them better for cooking.

Pumpkin makes a great ingredient in soups, stews, quick breads, pancakes, or pumpkins stuffed with rice, sausage and dried fruit. Pumpkin seeds from any pumpkin can also be dried and roasted. Pumpkins that have been carved or put out for decoration should never be consumed.

The bright orange color of pumpkin is a giveaway that a pumpkin is loaded with an important antioxidant, beta-carotene. Beta-carotene is converted to vitamin A in the body and performs many important functions in overall health. Current research indicates that a diet rich in foods containing beta-carotene may reduce the risk of developing certain types of cancer and offers protection against heart disease. Pumpkins also contain potassium and are rich in fiber, slowing digestion, which keeps you feeling full for a longer time.

Pumpkin seeds also known as pepitas, are a good source of protein, fiber, B vitamins, iron and potassium. To roast the seeds, clean them off, dry with paper towels, spray or stir in a little vegetable oil, salt lightly and roast on a cookie sheet lined with foil for 45 minutes (or until golden brown) at 250°F.



While pumpkin is a powerhouse of nutrients and fiber, don't be fooled by seasonal foods that say pumpkin spice (then the name of food), such as **Pumpkin** spice **Oatmeal**, or **Pumpkin** spice **Muffins**, etc. These foods may have no actual pumpkin in them, only the spices (cinnamon, cloves, & nutmeg) and sugar associated with pumpkin pie. Be sure to read the ingredient list.

*Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...*

## Let's Talk

**Pumpkin Exploration:** If you have different sizes or varieties of pumpkins, have your children compare the sizes. Which are larger, smaller, rounder, longer, and/or taller? Ask your children to predict what the inside of the pumpkin looks like. What color is the inside of the pumpkin? Is it wet or dry on the inside? Put newspaper or a plastic table covering over the table. Cut a circle around the top of the pumpkin. Now explore the inside of your pumpkin. What do they see? What do they smell? What does it feel like? Take out all of the seeds and pulp from the middle of the pumpkin. Rinse them under cold water and separate the pulp/strings from the seeds. However, leaving some pulp will not hurt and even adds flavor! Roast the seeds, practice counting the seeds. Go to the library and check out books about pumpkins.

## Recipes for Health

### Turkey Pumpkin Chili Oregon State University Extension Service

#### Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon oil
- 1 pound lean ground turkey (15% fat)
- 2/3 cup chopped onion (2/3 medium onion)
- 1/2 cup green pepper, seeded and chopped (about 1 small pepper)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced or 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 can kidney beans, drained and rinsed (15 ounce or 1 3/4 cups)
- 1 can great northern beans, drained and rinsed (15 ounce or 1 3/4 cups)
- 1 can solid-pack pumpkin (15 ounce or 1 3/4 cups) (Or make your own pumpkin puree, see below)
- 1 can crushed tomatoes (15 ounce or 1 3/4 cups)
- 1 can chicken broth, low sodium (15 ounce or 1 3/4 cups)
- 1/2 cup water (Optional, depending on how thick you like it)
- 2 Tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 package taco seasoning mix (1.25 ounces)



#### Directions:

1. Pour oil into a 4 quart (or larger) saucepan.
2. Add ground turkey, onion, green pepper and garlic.
3. Cook and stir, breaking meat apart until meat is brown and vegetables are tender.
4. Stir in the beans, pumpkin puree, tomatoes, broth, water, brown sugar and taco seasoning.
5. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1 hour.
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

#### Notes:

Preparing cooked pumpkin.

- Cut a washed pumpkin into large pieces, removing the stringy mass and seeds and rinse again.
- Place the pumpkin halves, cut side down on a large greased baking sheet.
- Bake for one hour or until fork tender.
- Cool and scrape the pulp from the peel with a spoon.
- For a finer puree, put through a food mill, blender or food processor.

Measure out the puree based on the recipe directions above; freeze the rest for later.

