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The Pumpkin Patch...helping you play hard and eat right!

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A local pumpkin patch is a great place to get moving, enjoy nature, learn about science, practice math & bring home some great nutrition.

It's fall and thoughts turn to jack-o-lanterns and pumpkin pie. The bright orange color of pumpkins means they are loaded with a powerful antioxidant called beta-carotene. Diets high in beta-carotene help reduce the risk of many types of cancer, protect against heart disease, and promote eye health. Pumpkin is a low calorie food with only 49 calories per cup. It is low in carbohydrates, only 12 grams per cup, and provides 3 grams of fiber per cup.



Can you eat your jack-o-lantern pumpkin? Yes and no. If you draw the eyes and mouth on the skin of the pumpkin with markers, you can later cook the flesh and roast the seeds of uncut pumpkins. Make sure the pumpkin shows no signs of mold or rot before cooking. If you carve your jack-o-lantern, roast the seeds right away, but the flesh that was exposed to air should not be eaten if it was at room temperature for more than 2-4 hours. The pumpkins that make the best jack-o-lanterns (large and hollow) are often too stringy and watery to make a good pie filling. Consider finding a pie pumpkin to make a smaller jack-o-lantern. This way you can make your jack-o-lantern and eat your pie too.

Activity for Health: Take children to a pumpkin patch. Plan a scavenger hunt or other activities to help children be physically active while discovering how pumpkins grow. With a ruler or tape measure, have children find the smallest, tallest, or shortest, pumpkin. Look for pumpkins of different colors and shapes. School age children can be challenged with calculating the average number of pumpkins per row, etc. See if you can interview the farmer about how to grow pumpkins.

For a list of local pumpkin patch locations, contact your local county Colorado State University Extension office, or pick up a copy of the Colorado Farm Fresh Directory. The Directory is also available online at http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/ag_Markets/CBON/1251599403767

Let's Talk

Most kids like the mild taste of pumpkin, but many have only enjoyed it as a sweet pie filling. Surprise them with different ways to eat pumpkin. Let them help you come up with tasty ideas for cook-

ing with pumpkin. Ideas include cakes, cookies, pancakes, breads, puddings, dips, spreads and soups. These last three can be savory instead of sweet. Children can help in the kitchen by:

- Mixing ingredients
- Pouring Ingredients into pans, cups or bowls
- Taking ingredients to the table for recipe preparation
- Helping with cleanup after the recipe is completed

Recipe for Health:

Quick and Easy Creamy Pumpkin Soup

Ingredients

- 2 cups finely chopped onions
- 1/2 cup finely chopped celery
- 1 green chili pepper, chopped
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 6 cups chicken broth (three, 14.5 oz. cans)
- 2 cups pureed pumpkin (or one 16 oz. can solid pack pumpkin)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1-1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 cup evaporated skim milk (or 2 % milk)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional toppings: grated parmesan cheese, chopped parsley, croutons, chopped peanuts, roasted and shelled pumpkin seeds, crisp bacon bits, etc.

Directions

1. In a 6-quart saucepan, sauté onions, celery and chili pepper in oil. Cook until onions begin to look translucent.
2. Add chicken broth, pumpkin, bay leaf and cumin. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Remove bay leaf. Add milk, and without boiling, cook on low another 5 minutes.
4. Taste and adjust salt, pepper and seasoning.
5. Serve hot with optional toppings

Makes 6 – 8 servings

Recipe adapted from *Quick and Easy Pumpkin Soup*, University of Illinois Extension



Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

Ingredients

- 1 quart of water
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 cups pumpkin seeds
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 250 F.
2. Pick through seeds, remove as much stringy fibers as possible.
3. In a large saucepan, bring water and salt to a boil. Add seeds and boil for 10 minutes. Drain, spread on a paper towel and pat dry.
4. Place seeds in a bowl and toss with oil.
5. Spread evenly on a large cookie sheet. Roast at 250 F for 30 to 40 minutes. Stir about every 10 minutes.
6. When seeds are golden brown, remove from oven and cool. Eat or store in airtight containers and refrigerate until ready to eat.