

Ahh, the wonderful pumpkin...

Pumpkins are low in fat, calories, sodium, and loaded with nutrients. Just one cup of cooked pumpkin supplies you with your recommended daily allowances of Vitamin A and potassium. In fact, pumpkins are the only fruit that contain alpha-carotene, beta-carotene and lutein. This powerful combination protects against heart disease, cancer and even aging.

The seeds of the fruit can be roasted and enjoyed also. Pumpkin seeds, also known as pepitas, are packed with protein, fiber, iron, magnesium and zinc. Preliminary studies have shown that pumpkin seeds may reduce hormonal damage to prostate cell, thus possibly reducing the risk of prostate cancer. The seeds have also been used to treat urinary tract infections, and in China pumpkin seed oil has long been used as remedy for prostatitis.

With the approaching cooler autumn temperatures, take advantage of the seasonal and nutritional wonders of the pumpkin!

The colors of autumn are represented in the delicious fruits and vegetables that are now in season and readily available. Here are some ways to enjoy the taste and nutritional benefits of nature's seasonal "goodies"!

Pumpkin Bread

Recipe courtesy Alton Brown

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups sugar
3/4 cup vegetable oil
3 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 cups shredded fresh pumpkin
1 cup toasted pumpkin seeds

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

Sift the flour, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, and salt together.

In a separate bowl, mix the sugar, vegetable oil, eggs, and vanilla. Combine both mixtures and fold in the shredded pumpkin and pumpkin seeds. Once the ingredients are all incorporated pour into a non-stick 9 by 5 by 3-inch loaf pan. If your pan is not non-stick coat it with butter and flour.

Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes. At this point a knife inserted into the middle of the loaf should come out clean. Cool for 15 minutes and turn out onto a cooling rack. Cool completely. For muffins temperature should also be 325 degrees F., but bake for 30 minutes.