

Daily Union Article

Saturday, October 15, 2016

Topic: Peter the Pumpkin Eater!

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, had a wife..." Although this traditional American nursery rhyme doesn't turn out so well for the wife, I would like to point out that Peter was smart to be eating pumpkins! There are many health benefits to this favorite Fall food!

The bright orange color of pumpkins indicate that, like carrots, they are high in beta-carotene which is an antioxidant found in brightly colored fruits and vegetables. As the brightness of a fruit or vegetable increases, you can be assured that the beta-carotene it contains increases, as well. Beta-carotene is needed in our bodies. It converts into Vitamin A (retinol) – a nutrient needed for good vision and eye health, as well as for a strong immune system and healthy skin. Check out the pumpkin nutrition label provided. You can see the nutritional value of pumpkin and the high percent of Vitamin A it contains in relation to the daily value.

The precursor for Vitamin A, beta-carotene, is also an antioxidant that protects the body from damaging molecules called free radicals. These molecules damage our body's cells through oxidation. Over time, oxidation leads to a wide variety of chronic illnesses. There is ample research that supports the importance of consuming antioxidants as a way to lower your risk for heart disease and cancer.

Looking closer at the food label, you can see that pumpkins are also naturally fat free, cholesterol free, and sodium free! These types of food are ideal for those struggling with cholesterol and heart disease.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup pumpkin (123g)

Amount Per Serving

Calories 25 **Calories from Fat 0**

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g **0%**

Saturated Fat 0g **0%**

 Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 0mg **0%**

Total Carbohydrate 6g **2%**

 Dietary Fiber 1g **4%**

 Sugars 3g

Protein 1g

Vitamin A 140% • **Vitamin C 10%**

Calcium 2% • **Iron 4%**

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

		Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than		65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than		20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than		300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than		2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate			300g	375g
Dietary Fiber			25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

There are other yellow and orange fruits and vegetables that provide similar health benefits. Other members of the winter squash family, alongside pumpkin, are acorn, butternut, and spaghetti squash. These vegetables offer the same health benefits as pumpkin while adding a variety of color and texture to your palate.

When picking out your winter squash, look for these characteristics:

- ✓ Hard outer skin with fleshy outside
- ✓ Heavy in weight for their size and free of spots
- ✓ Squash doesn't have to be "pretty" to be healthy – so misshaped squash are a great nutrient source, too!

Now that you know the nutritional value of orange and yellow fruits and vegetables, look over the list provided to see which of them you would like to try as something new OR that you would like to add more of to your diet:

Orange	Yellow
Apricots	Chickpeas
Butternut Squash	Corn
Cantaloupe melons	Crookneck squash
Carrots	Mangoes
Nectarines	Pineapples
Oranges	Yellow peppers
Papayas	Yellow summer squash
Peaches	Yellow tomatoes
Pumpkin	Wax beans
Sweet Potatoes	
Tangerines	

All too often our “go to” use for pumpkin is the traditional pumpkin pie or other sugary options that offset the nutritional value of squash. Here are some unique recipes that incorporate orange and yellow vegetables without making them solely a desert alternative:

Zucchini Carrot Bread

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ½ cup canola oil
- 1 cup grated zucchini
- ½ cup grated carrots
- ½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Directions:

1. In a large mixing bowl stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and ginger. Set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, beat the egg, then add the oil, grated zucchini and grated carrots. Mix well.
3. Add the zucchini mixture and nuts to the flour mixture. Stir only until all the flour is blended. Do not overmix or the bread will be dry and chewy.
4. Scrape the batter into a well-greased 9-inch bread pan and bake in a preheated 375°F oven for 50 minutes.

5. Remove from the oven and let the bread cool in the pan 5 minutes, then turn out onto a rack or plate.

6. Serve warm or cool. Makes one 9-inch loaf. Serves 6

Nutrition Facts per Serving:

Calories 270; Fat 1g; Cholesterol 10g; Sodium 20mg; Carbohydrates 33g; Fiber 1g; Sugar 19g, Protein 9g.

Source: <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/ssquash.cfm>

Pumpkin Mac and Cheese

Ingredients:

1 box (16 oz.) macaroni (whole wheat, if possible)

3 tablespoons salted butter

3 tablespoons flour

2 cups 1% or fat free milk

1 teaspoon mustard

1 ¼ cups pumpkin puree (canned or fresh)

2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

¼ teaspoon pepper

¼ teaspoon nutmeg

A generous pinch of salt

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.

2. Cook macaroni according to package directions.

3. Melt butter and add flour. Allow to cook for about 2 minutes, then add milk. Heat back up to a simmer, and simmer for about 4 minutes, until milk mixture coats the back of the spoon.

4. Add seasonings and pumpkin. Stir. Add cheese and stir occasionally until melted.

5. Mix in macaroni, and pour into a lightly greased 9x13" baking pan. Bake 20-25 minutes, until top is gold brown. Serves 10.

Nutrition Facts per Serving:

Calories 320; Fat 12g; Cholesterol 35g; Sodium 24g; Carbohydrates 41g; Sugar 4g; Fiber 5g; Protein 15g.

Sources: http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/gardenerscorner/issue_01/fall_04_04.cfm
www.gfruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/pumpkin

For more information about healthy fruits and vegetables and ways to incorporate them into your diet, contact me at the Geary County Extension office 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!