



PUMPKIN

Description

Pumpkin is a gourd like squash. Since some squash share the same botanical classifications as pumpkins, the name are frequently used interchangeably. Pumpkins vary in shape, the rind is smooth and usually lightly ribbed.

Varieties

There are many, many varieties of pumpkins, some are grown for ornamental use, others for cooking and still others for pies. They range in weight from 2 pounds to the Atlantic Giant variety which has a record weight of 1689 pounds. The 2007 record pumpkin was grown in Rhode Island and weighed at the Topsfield Fair in Massachusetts.

Recipe

Pumpkin-Maple Pie

1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup maple syrup
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. allspice
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs, lightly beaten
2 cups cooked, drained, mashed fresh pumpkin
1 1/4 cups evaporated milk
9 inch unbaked pie shell
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 to 2 Tablespoons additional maple syrup
1 tsp. vanilla.

Blend together sugar, maple syrup, cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg and salt with the eggs. Stir in the pumpkin and milk. Pour ingredients into pie shell and bake in a preheated 450 degree oven for 15 minutes, then at 300 degrees for another 25 to 30 minutes. Do the knife test an inch in from the rim of the crust. If it comes out clean it's done. Before serving the cooled pie, whip the cream, adding the maple syrup and vanilla. Top each portion with a dallop of the whipped cream.

Nutrient Content

The main healthful qualities of pumpkin nutrition are the large amounts of antioxidants and beta-carotene present within the pumpkin. Antioxidants help strengthen our immune system. Beta-carotene converts to Vitamin A and helps reduce the risk of cancer and other dangerous diseases. Pumpkins by themselves are also very low in fat and calories, and high in potassium. They possess a fair amount of Vitamin C and other nutrients, such as Niacin, Vitamin E, Calcium and Iron.

Uses

When ripe, the pumpkin is very versatile, It can be boiled, baked or roasted. Often it is made into various kinds of pie which is a traditional staple of the Canadian and American Thanksgiving holiday. Pumpkins that are small and green may be eaten in the say was as the vegetable zucchini. Pumpkins can be eaten mashed or incorporated into soup. If milk is poured into a pumpkin and then the pumpkin is baked into a pudding. Pumpkin can also be used to flavor both alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages. The hulled seeds can be roasted and eaten as a snack.

Availability

Seeds should be started indoors. Most growers time the planting season for the pumpkins to mature from September to October. Pumpkins are tender annuals. Frost will kill them, and cold weather will stunt their growth.

Origin

Native American Indians used pumpkins as a staple in their diets centuries before the pilgrims landed. They also dried strips of pumpkin and wove them into mats. Indians would also roast long strips of pumpkin on an open fire and ate them. The origin of pumpkin pie is thought to have occurred when the early settlers removed the seeds and filled it with milk, spices and honey, and then baked it in hot ashes of a dying fire.