

# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Cooperative Extension Service

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## Pumpkins

This time of year many of us are purchasing pumpkins for carving or other ornamental purposes. While this is certainly a festive autumn pastime, don't forget that pumpkin is great for eating as well—and not just in the form of all those pies that will soon be showing up in the bakery section of your grocery store! In the spirit of the season I thought it would be a good time to talk a little about *eating* pumpkin – an often underappreciated food.

Pumpkins are in the same family as cantaloupe, cucumber, watermelon, squash, and gourds. Fast becoming a popular crop, over 1.5 billion pounds of pumpkin are produced in the U.S. annually. Pumpkin is a very good source of vitamins A and C, potassium, fiber, is fat-free and only ~80 calories a cup. While pie is probably the most popular pumpkin food, it can also be baked, roasted, boiled or steamed. The puree makes a great addition to many baked goods, and can be a common replacement for the fat in a recipe.

When using fresh pumpkin please consider these tips:

### BUYING:

1. Choose firm, sound pumpkins that feel heavy for their size and have a stem.
2. When choosing a cooking pumpkin, look for smaller varieties (3-4 pounds) such as a “sugar pumpkin” or Kobacha squash.

### STORING:

1. Store fresh pumpkins in a cool (55-59°F), humid, dark place for up to 3 months.
2. *Do not* store fresh pumpkin in a refrigerator or wrap in plastic.
3. For cooked pumpkin, let cool. Then place 1 ¾ cup portions in freezer containers (leave ½ inch between lid and pumpkin). Label, date and freeze for up to one year.

### COOKING:

1. Heat the oven to 350°F.
2. Clean the outer shell.
3. Cut the pumpkin in half then remove the seeds and stringy pulp.
4. Place the pumpkin halves cut side down on a baking sheet. Bake for about one hour or until easily pierced with a fork. Spoon the soft pulp out of the shell.

Feel free to enjoy the following recipe, a great low-calorie muffin from the Dining with Diabetes in Wyoming cookbook (2008).

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### Pumpkin Spice Muffins

Servings: 18 muffins

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1¼ cups whole-wheat flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
2 tsp cinnamon  
½ tsp nutmeg  
1 tsp baking soda  
2 eggs, beaten  
1 cup pumpkin puree  
3 to 4 Tbsp Splenda

½ cup unsweetened applesauce  
2 Tbsp canola oil

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1. Preheat the oven to 375<sup>0</sup> F.
2. Mix together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, and baking soda in a medium bowl.
3. Combine remaining ingredients in a large bowl.
4. Slowly add dry ingredients to the large bowl and mix until blended.
5. Pour the batter into 18 non-stick muffin cups (or use cupcake paper liners) and bake for about 25 minutes.
6. Remove muffins from pan and let cool completely.

Nutritional Analysis (1 muffin):

90 calories, 2.5g total fat, .5g saturated fat, 25mg cholesterol, 120mg sodium, 13g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 3g protein

Source: Sarah L. Francis PhD, MHS, RD

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**Note: feel free to cut the nutrition analysis if this one takes up too much space.**