

Pumpkins Galore!

Pumpkin bread, muffins, soup, desserts and beverages are very popular in the fall and winter. Pumpkins technically are a type of squash. They are botanically considered fruits even though some are used as vegetables on menus. Pumpkins and winter squash have long shelf lives of two to three months, or longer, if kept in a cool, dry place.

Pumpkin pie is the dessert featured at many Thanksgiving meals. Can you preserve your own canned pumpkin pie filling?

If you like to use commercially canned mashed pumpkin in recipes, be aware that tested recipes are not available for home-canning mashed pumpkin, including pumpkin butter. Pumpkin cubes (1-inch squares) can be pressure-canned safely following current guidelines.

Can I freeze mashed pumpkin?

Yes, freezing mashed pumpkin can be done safely.

- Select full-colored mature pumpkin with firm texture. Wash, cut into cooking-size sections and remove seeds. Cook until soft in boiling water, in steam, in a pressure cooker or in an oven. Remove pulp from rind and mash. To cool, place pan containing pumpkin in cold water and stir occasionally. Package, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

How do I prepare pumpkin seeds?

Pumpkin seeds are rich in fiber and make excellent snacks.

- To dry, carefully wash pumpkin seeds to remove the clinging fibrous pumpkin tissue. Pumpkin seeds can be dried in the sun, in an electric dehydrator at 115 to 120°F for 1 to 2 hours, or in an oven on a very low, warm temperature only, for 3 to 4 hours. Stir them frequently to avoid scorching. Dried seeds should not be stored with any moisture left in them.

Cinnamon and Sugar Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

Ingredients:

1 c pumpkin seeds	1 T. melted butter	1 T. sugar
¾ t. cinnamon	¼ t. nutmeg	dash of salt

Procedure:

1. Preheat oven to 300° F.
2. Toss seeds with melted butter.
3. Mix dry ingredients and sprinkle over seeds; toss.
4. Line a well-greased baking sheet with seed mixture and bake for approximately 50 minutes.
5. Stir and mix the seeds often to keep them from burning and sticking. Bake until browned.

Makes 8 (2 T.) servings. Each serving has 170 calories, 14 g fat, 7 g protein, 7 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber and 5 mg sodium.