

Culinary Enlightenment

a newsletter about food and nutrition

Issue 2

October 29, 2007

Food Feature

Pumpkin

This winter squash is everywhere right now...in the form of Jack-o-Lanterns! Although you may not consider edible until it comes in the form of pumpkin pie, this delectable fruit (yes, fruit!) is a nutritional powerhouse to be explored.

The bright orange flesh tells us that pumpkins are loaded with beta-carotene, an antioxidant that becomes Vitamin A in the body. Current research tells us a diet rich in beta-carotene may reduce the risk of developing certain cancers and protect against heart disease.

For the brave at heart, start with a whole pumpkin. Pick a small "pie pumpkin" or "sugar pumpkin". Each pound of raw pumpkin will yield about 1 cup puree. Cut the pumpkin in half, remove seeds and strings, rinse, and place cut side down on a foil lined baking sheet. Bake at 350° until fork tender. Scoop out insides

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Nutrition in a Nutshell

How Sweet it is...Sugar

Since Halloween is just around the corner, it seems appropriate to discuss a sticky subject: sugar.

Scientists agree that we are born with a desire for sweetness, although food preferences develop with experience. Newborns are attracted to sweets because they represent safe and nourishing foods. Our biology tells us we will get energy from sweet foods. Our love for all things sweet is nothing new,

but our current consumption is at astronomical levels.

On average, Americans eat or drink about five pounds of sugar a month. That's a lot of calories with no nutritional benefits. Our digestive system and metabolism do not differentiate between naturally occurring sugars and sugars added to food.

Glucose is the simple sugar that primarily fuels our bodies and brain. Glucose is used by cells, stored in the liver and muscles as glycogen, or converted

to fat and stored.

After eating sugar, simple sugars are absorbed into the bloodstream. The body releases insulin which tells cells in the body to absorb glucose. Depending on your body's needs, the glucose may be used immediately by cells or stored as glycogen for later use. Unfortunately, our glycogen stores are limited and extra glucose will be converted to fat and stored. Historically this was helpful because of food shortages. But now

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Silky Pumpkin Soup



Ingredients:

1/4 cup chopped shallots
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 Tbs finely chopped or grated ginger
1 Tbs brown sugar
1 15-oz can pumpkin
1 cup vegetable stock
1 cup light coconut milk
salt & pepper to taste

Directions:

1) Sauté shallots. Add garlic, ginger and brown sugar.
2) When sugar has melted, add pumpkin. Stir well.
3) Add vegetable stock and coconut milk.

4) Simmer 15 minutes.

5) Season with salt & pepper. Take off heat.

6) Carefully whirl in blender.

7) Garnish with a dollop of vanilla yogurt or some toasted coconut.

Culinary Enlightenment

is a small business owned by Lauren Squier, MPH, RD. Lauren enjoys teaching nutrition and healthy cooking to children, adults and families.

Lauren graduated from Cal State Long Beach with a degree in Dietetics & Food Administration, completed a Master of Public Health at UC Berkeley, and finished culinary school at Laguna Culinary Arts.

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and mash. You can create a sweet or savory puree, similar to mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes. Or you can make muffins, a variety of desserts, or soup (see recipe on Page 1). Pumpkin puree also freezes well.

If you are simply curious what a pumpkin has to offer, look for canned pumpkin with the fewest added ingredients. ENJOY!

Nutrition Facts:

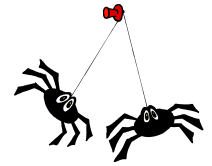
1/2 cup cooked pumpkin
115 calories, 3 g fiber, High in Vitamins A, C and Folate (Folic Acid).

Creepy Crawly Spider Sandwiches

Share this creepy snack with a little someone you love!

Ingredients for 4 sandwiches:

8 pieces soft whole wheat sandwich bread
1/4 cup + 2 teaspoons creamy peanut butter
1/4 cup strawberry jam (look for reduced sugar)
35 pretzel sticks
8 raisins



- 1) Cut a circle from each piece of bread using a 3-inch round cookie or biscuit cutter.
- 2) Divide the bread into two equal piles.
- 3) Spread 1 Tablespoon peanut butter on 4 bread circles.
- 4) Press 4 pretzels on the left side and 4 pretzels on the right side of the peanut butter + bread (to look like the legs of a spider!).
- 5) Spread 1 Tablespoon strawberry jam on the other 4 bread circles.
- 6) Place these pieces of bread jam side down on top of the peanut butter and pretzels. Press gently so they stick together.
- 7) Using one finger, press two circles into the bread where the spider's eyes should be located.
- 8) Use the other 2 teaspoons of peanut butter as "glue" to stick the raisins into the pressed circles.
- 9) Enjoy your tasty treat!

Nutrition in a Nutshell

(Sugar - Continued from page 1)

that we are surrounded by food, our fat stores remain. So instead of fat being a helpful long-term storage device, like that rainy day bank account, it hangs around waiting for a famine to hit. Hmm...

The bottom line is that simple sugars and other carbohydrates are essential for our well being. That doesn't mean we should drink soda or eat candy though. We should aim to get as much nutrition from sweet foods as possible.

When looking for sugar on food labels, it is often found in one or more forms on the ingre-

dient list as well as under "Sugars" on the Nutrition Facts panel. The tricky part is that even naturally sweet treats like a cup of 100% fruit juice may have over 20 grams of sugars listed...from natural sources, not added sugars. So you need to double check for added sweeteners in the ingredient list when making smart choices.

Another thing to remember, how much nutrition are you going to get along with the sugar (from vitamins, minerals, fiber, water, etc.)? For instance, with a fresh pineapple wedge you get a considerable amount of natural sugar, but you also get a bunch of vitamins, fiber and water too.

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS THINK?

In 2003, four United Nations agencies commissioned a report on sugar consumption. The report was compiled by 30 international experts and stated that *total added sugars plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and fruit juices should account for no more than 10% of caloric intake.*

WHAT ABOUT ME?

This means that a person consuming 1800 calories a day should not have more than 180 calories or 60 grams of sugars. (All sugars, as well as other carbohydrates, are 4 calories per gram.)