

Pumpkins – More Than Just Jack-o-Lanterns

October is the month for pumpkins! Pumpkins grow well in our area, and are in abundance at this time of year. When most people think of pumpkins, jack-o-lanterns and pies are usually what come to mind but these nutritious, versatile and hardy gourds can be so much more.

Did you know the world's largest pumpkin weighed in at over 1600 pounds! Even more surprising is that in some communities people hollow out pumpkins, make them into boats and have annual pumpkin boat races. If you don't believe me ... look it up on the internet.

Like other types of squash, pumpkins are full of nutrients. Their deep orange coloured flesh is packed with beta-carotene. This is an antioxidant that helps prevent heart disease and cancer. Pumpkins are also a good source of vitamin C, potassium and fibre.

Pumpkin pie is a popular treat but pumpkin can be used for so much more. Try it in cookies, pancakes, loaves, muffins, soups and more. When choosing a pumpkin for cooking, look for one that is smaller and heavy for its size.

When carving your Halloween jack- o-lantern be sure to save the seeds for roasting. Baked pumpkin seeds are a healthy snack and they are easy to make. Just rinse the pumpkin seeds to remove pulp then lay the seeds on a piece of paper towel to dry. Next, put the seeds in a bowl with a bit of vegetable oil and your favourite flavouring (Mrs. Dash, seasoning salt, or cinnamon and brown sugar. Finally, spread the seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake at 350° F, stirring occasionally until light brown and crisp (about 15-25 minutes).

Looking for a way to use up that left over pumpkin puree? Check out this tasty and healthy muffin recipe from Healthy Families BC: <https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/blog/pumpkin-raisin-muffins-tracy-nash>.

Happy pumpkin season!

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