

October is for Pumpkins – Camerota’s Cupboard –October 2010

This month the focus is on colorful pumpkins, a symbol of the fall season. Although we tend to use them only in the autumn, Europeans serve dishes made with this versatile vegetable all year.

In addition to 3 recipes, I’ve included research information from The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) on seeds and nuts.

Did you know that pumpkins are a great source of vitamins? True.

According to Polly Campbell, food editor of the Cincinnati Enquirer writing in the October 14, 2009 paper:

“Canned pumpkin most often gets baked in pies, but it’s such a healthy food that it’s worth thinking of other ways to use it. A half-cup has only 40 calories, but 3 grams of fiber, more than three times the vitamin A you need in a day, plus plenty of vitamin C and K, iron and manganese. Try adding it to cookies, muffins, quick breads and pancakes, or make pumpkin soup.”

RESEARCH ON YOUR PLATE (from AICR)

Seeds of Nutrition

Nuts and Seeds

If pumpkin carving has you hungering for a snack break this Halloween season, hold onto those seedy innards. Seeds are one of the most overlooked healthful foods. Perfect for snacks or part of main dishes, they are packed with compounds that may play a role in preventing cancer and contribute to a healthful diet.

Botanically speaking, nuts are seeds that are covered with a hard shell. Like seeds, nuts are reproductive structures ready to sprout into a plant, and so packed with nutrients to spur on the seedling.

Tiny Packages of Health

Because seeds and nuts contain all the substances for a new plant, they hold a lot of healthful compounds. Nuts and seeds are a good source of vitamins and minerals, including vitamin E, zinc, iron and magnesium. Just one serving (an

ounce) of pumpkin seeds contains almost a quarter of the recommended amount of daily iron.

Most seeds and nuts are also good sources of dietary fiber, which may help protect against colorectal cancer, according to the AICR expert report.

Most nuts and seeds are high in protein. Several types including pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts and almonds provide as much protein in a serving as one ounce of meat or one egg. Eating more nut and seed protein can mean cutting back on red meat, which is linked to increased risk of colorectal cancer.

The strongest evidence for their health benefits indicates that nuts may help reduce heart disease. In general, nuts contain monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, two types of healthful fats. A consistent body of research suggests that monounsaturated fat can reduce levels of LDL cholesterol, the “bad” one. At the same time, it either boosts or does not affect levels of HDL cholesterol, the “good cholesterol.” Some seeds and nuts also contain relatively high amounts of phytosterols, natural plant compounds with a chemical structure similar to cholesterol that may help lower blood cholesterol levels

Seeds of Cancer Fighting

The evidence relating to how nuts and seeds may play a role in cancer prevention is ongoing; much of the research focuses on colorectal cancer. For example a large European study in 2005 found a significant link between high amounts of seed/nut consumption and lower colon cancer risk in women, but no associations in men.

A 2006 study found that frequent nut and seed consumption was associated with lower levels of signs of inflammation, which may be linked to cancer. Among seeds and nuts, flax seeds and walnuts are among the most studied for their role in fighting cancer. In one lab study funded by AICR, researchers last year found evidence that a daily dose of walnuts equal to two servings a day in humans curbs the growth of breast cancer tumors in mice. Flaxseed appears to have relatively weak estrogenic effects in the body. In some studies, flaxseed has shown anticancer properties to estrogen-related cancers, such as breast, but human studies are still too limited for clear answers.

Pick Your Seed; Mind Your Portion

With so many different varieties, each with its own distinct flavor and texture, it's likely you can find at least some types of seeds or nuts you enjoy on their own or added to other dishes. But because many nuts and seeds are concentrated in calories, watch your portion.

Nutrition Highlights

Sunflower 1 oz 165 Vitamin B6, vitamin E, phytosterols, protein, fiber, selenium, zinc

Pumpkin 1 oz 150 Magnesium, protein, phytosterols, vitamin k, iron, zinc

Flax 1 oz 150 fiber; omega 3 fatty acids, iron, magnesium, phytosterols

Sesame 1 oz 160 Calcium, iron, phytosterols, fiber, magnesium, zinc

Pistachio 1 oz 160 monounsaturated fats, phytosterols, fiber, vitamin B6, copper, manganese, protein

Almond 1 oz (20-25 whole almonds) 170 protein, magnesium, vitamin E, monounsaturated fats, fiber

Walnuts 1 oz (14 halves) 175 omega 3 fatty acid, fiber, magnesium, copper, manganese

Macadamias 1 oz (10-12 nuts) 200 monounsaturated fats, thiamin, manganese

Cashews 1 oz (16 -18) 155 Iron, magnesium, monounsaturated fats, copper

Sources:

* Association of Nut and Seed Intake with Colorectal Cancer Risk in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev. 2004 Oct:13

* Nut and seed consumption and inflammatory markers in the multi-ethnic study of atherosclerosis. Am J Epidemiol. 2006 Feb 1;163(3):222-31.

* USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference

* Nutrition Data.com

Tasty Spice Mixes for Pumpkin Seeds

(From the AICR Test Kitchen)

Toasting Your Pumpkin Seeds

Seeds straight from the pumpkin can be washed, dried, seasoned and toasted to make a delicious, crunchy snack. Just make sure you pre-toast them in a single

layer on a baking sheet in a 300-degree oven, until they are crisp. Or you can buy hulled pumpkin seeds (green and smaller than white seeds right from the pumpkin), which take less time to pre-toast (see recipes, below). At our house we take a shortcut and simply mix the cleaned seeds with the seasonings and bake in the oven until done.

Sweet-Hot Pumpkin Seeds with Autumn Spices

If you've ever tasted red pepper jelly, you know that sweet and hot tastes combine well. This recipe adds warm autumn spices for a handful of crunchy pumpkin seeds that have a lot of taste.

- * Canola oil spray
- * 1 cup pumpkin seeds (scooped whole from the pumpkin then washed and dried and pre-toasted for 30 minutes in a 300-degree oven; or hulled, prepackaged from the grocery store)
- * 4 tsp. walnut oil (olive oil may be substituted)
- * 1 tsp. ground ginger
- * Pinch cloves
- * 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- * 1/2 tsp. chili powder or paprika (optional)
- * 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. dark brown sugar
- * Dash salt
- * 2 tsp. water

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat baking sheet with canola oil spray. Either pre-toast whole seeds from pumpkin (as noted above), or spread hulled seeds on pan in one layer and toast in oven until just crisp. Meanwhile, in small skillet, whisk together oil, spices, sugar, salt and water. Simmer on low heat, stirring occasionally, until seeds finish toasting. Remove seeds from oven and stir into spice mixture, coating evenly, and cook on stove for another 5 minutes. Return seeds to baking sheet, patting into one layer. Bake until crisp. Remove from oven, let cool and gently loosen from baking sheet with tip of metal spatula. Store in a tightly covered container.

Makes 8 servings (2 tablespoons each).

Per serving: 180 calories, 14 g total fat (2.5 g saturated fat), 6 g carbohydrates, 9 g protein, 1 g dietary fiber, 160 mg sodium.

(Nutrition analysis based on using hulled, packaged seeds.)

Garlicky Pumpkin Seed Snack Mix

This recipe dilutes the saltiness of the Worcestershire sauce with some water. Or substitute another sauce you might like: barbecue, hoisin or “lite” soy could all work well with garlic and cumin.

- * Canola oil spray
- * 1 cup pumpkin seeds (scooped whole from the pumpkin then washed and dried and pre-toasted in a 300-degree oven until crisp; or hulled, prepackaged from the grocery store)
- * 1 tsp. garlic powder
- * 1/2 tsp. cumin
- * 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- * 1 tsp. water
- * 1 cup blanched, slivered almonds or chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat baking sheet with canola oil spray. Either pre-toast whole seeds from pumpkin (as noted above), or spread hulled seeds on pan in one layer and toast in oven until crisp. Meanwhile, in medium bowl, combine garlic powder and cumin. Thoroughly whisk in Worcestershire sauce and water. Remove toasted seeds from oven. When cool, add to bowl with sauce along with walnuts. Toss to coat evenly. Spread seeds and nuts on baking sheet in one layer. Bake about 10 minutes, or until crisp. Remove from oven, let cool and gently loosen from pan with end of metal spatula. Store in a tightly covered container.

Makes 12 servings (2-3 tablespoons each).

Per serving: 140 calories, 12 g total fat (2 g saturated fat), 4 g carbohydrates, 8 g protein, 2 g dietary fiber, 120 mg sodium.

(Nutrition analysis based on using hulled, packaged seeds.)

Pumpkin Soup

Here's a recipe that I've been working on for a couple of weeks and finally, after making it a few times, have it the way I want it. The original recipe came from an old newspaper clipping. I reduced the salt (considerably) substituted olive oil for butter and maple syrup for sugar. Unlike the original I'm using reduced fat peanut butter and fat free, low salt chicken broth. Also I added the carrot and red bell pepper to enrich the soup. Because of the added veggies, I pureed the soup making it thicker and creamier. The staff of The Nutrition Council of Greater Cincinnati kindly provided the nutritional analysis.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp. allspice
- 1 chopped yellow onion
- 1 chopped carrot
- 1 cut-up red bell pepper
- 2 14 oz. can fat-free, low sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups pumpkin puree
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. white pepper
- 1 tsp. maple syrup
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon reduced fat creamy peanut butter
- Roasted pumpkin seeds for garnish (optional)

In a medium size heavy pot over medium heat, heat oil, add the cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice. Then add the onion, carrot, and red pepper. When the vegetables are soft, after about 10 minutes, add the chicken broth, pumpkin puree, peanut butter, salt and pepper, bay leaves and maple syrup. Stir to mix and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook about an hour. Remove from heat and discard bay leaves. When cooled, puree in batches in blender.

Reheat and adjust seasoning. Garnish with pumpkins seeds if desired. Serves 5-6

Nutrition information per serving: 124 calories, 4 grams protein, 13 grams carbohydrate, 5 grams dietary fiber, 7 grams total fat, (4 grams monounsaturated fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 388 mg sodium. This soup is an excellent source of vitamin

A – 280% of the recommended daily value and a good source of vitamin C – 45% of the recommended daily value.

Pumpkin Ricotta Pie

This dessert recipe comes from *More Nutritious Still Delicious*, edited by the staff of the Nutrition Council of Greater Cincinnati. The book is available for sale from the Council.

2 large eggs

1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese

1 can (16 ounces solid packed pumpkin

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup firmly packed brown sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup evaporated skim milk

1 9 inch (6 ounces) ready-to-serve graham cracker pie crust

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. In large mixing bowl add eggs; beat lightly to blend. Add cheese; beat to form a smooth mixture.
3. Stir in pumpkin, brown sugar, salt, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla and milk.
4. Using mixer on low speed, blend thoroughly. Pour into graham cracker pie crust.
5. Bake in 375 degree oven for 45 minutes. Cool completely on wire rack; then refrigerate until ready to serve.

Makes 8 servings

Nutrition information per serving: 288 calories. 82 gm protein. 42 gm carbohydrate. 3 gm dietary fiber. 10 gm fat. 3 gm saturated fat. 62 mg cholesterol. 327 mg sodium

Happy Halloween!