

Pie Pumpkin

Pumpkin has been cultivated in its native regions of South and Central America for over 9000 years. In the New England area, it was a staple among Native American tribes long before the arrival of Europeans.

The two most common varieties are the pie pumpkin, which has a thicker wall and is smaller in size, and the Jack o' lantern, used for carving and display.

With the onset of cooler weather vines of the pumpkin die back and it is ready to harvest. Pumpkins will last for months with curing and proper storage. They are an excellent source of vitamin A in the winter, and are also high in iron, potassium, and phosphorus.

CULINARY TIPS

- Scrape the pumpkin's inner walls with a wide serving spoon.
- Homemade pumpkin puree can be much thinner in texture than canned. After pureeing the cooked or baked pumpkin, you can simmer it on the stove to cook it down.
- Use cooked mashed pumpkin in cake and muffin recipes for added moisture.
- Substitute shelled pumpkin seeds for pine nuts in recipes for a less expensive alternative.

HOW TO STORE

Pumpkin will store at room temperature for several weeks, or for several months at 40-50°F. Cook, puree, and pack it into airtight containers and store in the freezer for up to one year.

3 WAYS TO PREPARE

- Sauté ½ inch slices with rings of onion, fresh grated ginger until golden brown on both sides. Add a pinch of salt or sweeten slightly with drizzled honey or maple syrup.
- To use as edible decorative bowl, clean out and steam whole.
- Steam 1½ - 2 inch chunks for 15-20 minutes. Use for puree or top with butter.

THAI-STYLE PUMPKIN SOUP

Warm and spicy, this soup is a perfect fall dinner with a delicious Thai twist.
Serves 6.

1 small pie pumpkin, peeled and cut into large chunks
1/2 bulb celeriac, peeled and cut into large chunks
2 T butter (or use coconut oil to make vegan)
1-2 T Thai red curry paste (mae ploy)
2 t coriander seeds, freshly ground
2 t green cardamom pods, smashed
2 leeks finely sliced
2 celery ribs finely sliced
14-oz can full-fat coconut milk, strained
4 c stock vegetable or chicken: preferably homemade
2 lemongrass stalks chopped
1 kaffir lime leaf, sliced or 1 lime, zested & juiced
2 T fish sauce (nam pla) **omit if making vegetarian
1 Thai red chili (prik chi fa), fresh or dried
Cilantro, for garnish

Steam pumpkin and celeriac until tender, about 30-45 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the coconut milk, sliced kaffir lime leaf (or lime), and chopped lemongrass into a small saucepan. Simmer for 10 minutes until flavors are infused, then set aside.

Melt the butter in a soup pot or dutch oven, then add the sliced leeks and sauté until soft. Mix in the curry paste, fresh chili, coriander, and smashed cardamom pods. Raise the heat a touch and fry, stirring frequently for about 2-3 minutes, until fragrant.

Add the pumpkin, celeriac, and chicken broth to the mixture. Continue to cook until the squash is tender to the point of falling apart, then add in the strained coconut milk and fish sauce.

Blend the soup in a blender or Vitamix. Return to the pot and season with salt and freshly ground pepper. Garnish with fresh cilantro and serve.