

Pumpkin and Chocolate Chip Cupcakes

... *With added pumpkin and yellow squash puree. A delightful treat sure to please the whole family.*

Makes 12 cupcakes. Can be wrapped individually and frozen for up to one month.

Cake batter:

1 cup canned pumpkin puree

½ cup yellow squash puree

½ cup firmly packed light or dark brown sugar

½ cup water

1/3 cup canola oil

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour

1 ½ teaspoons baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup semisweet chocolate chips

Frosting:

1 (8-oz.) package reduced-fat cream cheese

1/3 cup pure maple syrup

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Coat 12-cup muffin tin with cooking spray or use paper baking cups.
2. Put the pumpkin and squash purees in a large mixing bowl. Add brown sugar, water, oil, and vanilla. Beat with mixer until well blended.
3. Add the flour, salt, baking soda, and chocolate chips and mix/blend together.
4. Divide the batter among the 12 muffin cups.
5. Bake until the tops of the cupcakes are lightly browned and spring back to the touch, about 20-25 minutes.
6. Turn the cupcakes out onto a rack to cool before frosting them.

7. For the frosting, beat the cream cheese with the maple syrup, vanilla, and salt until smooth. Spread the frosting on the cooled cupcakes.
8. Store the cupcakes in an airtight container at room temperature for up to two days or wrap individually and freeze for up to one month.

Fun facts about Pumpkins and Pumpkin Puree:

Pumpkins are packed with nutrients, especially beta-carotene and fiber. Our bodies use beta-carotene to produce vitamin A. In fact, half a cup of pumpkin provides 200 percent of the current recommendation for vitamin A, along with lutein and zeaxanthin, which are pigments that promote eye health. Pumpkins are rich in potassium, which helps our muscles contract and nerves fire. While pumpkin is low in calories.

Pumpkin seeds prove very nutritious. Two tablespoons of unshelled and roasted pumpkin seeds are only 125 calories and contains 15 grams of carbohydrates, five grams of protein, five percent of your daily iron needs.

You can make pumpkin soup or hummus, turn pumpkin puree into some type of pasta sauce, a yummy chili or even make lasagna! Some people sweeten pumpkin with honey and toss it in their yogurt, others use pumpkin substitute as part of the fat in baked goods (think something like brownies).

Roasting the pumpkins seeds in salt and pepper, chili powder or cinnamon is a slightly healthier option as well!

Every October 26th you can celebrate **National Pumpkin Day**. This unofficial holiday is a convenient day to carve your pumpkin so it is ready for Halloween on the 31st.

Is canned pumpkin puree really pumpkin? While it depends on the specific brand, most of the time, yes. Some brands add sugar, preservatives and spices to their products, while others are 100% pure pumpkin. Another reason to read the label.

Is pumpkin puree the same as canned pumpkin? Yes, both are cooked, pureed pumpkin.

Only the “flesh” of the pumpkin is used to make puree, while the hard outside shell and pumpkin seeds are discarded.