

FAST AND FABULOUS PUMPKIN RECIPES FROM PAM COLLACOTT

COOKING PUMPKIN WHOLE

Choose a pumpkin that fits in your microwave. Wash it then pierce the skin several times with a sharp knife. Weigh the pumpkin. Place in rimmed dish. Microwave on High for 6 to 7 minutes per pound or until very tender all over when pierced with a sharp knife. When cool enough to handle, cut in half, remove seeds and fibers and discard. Scoop out pulp. Puree or mash pulp and freeze in quantities needed for your favourite pumpkin recipes including these:

PUMPKIN SOUP WITH BACON AND ONION

In large saucepan over medium heat cook together $\frac{3}{4}$ cup finely chopped onion, 4 slices of bacon, finely chopped, 1 large clove garlic, minced. When mixture is light brown, remove from pan. Discard pan drippings. Add to same pot 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups pumpkin puree and 3 cups chicken stock; heat to boiling. Stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each: salt and pepper, a dash of nutmeg and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Arborio rice. Cook on low heat for 20 minutes or until rice is tender. Stir in onion mixture. Taste and adjust seasonings. Serve hot, garnished with shredded cheddar or mozzarella cheese if desired. Serves six.

PUMPKIN MUFFINS

In large bowl stir together 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup packed brown sugar, 1 tablespoon baking powder and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon each: ground cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. In smaller bowl mix together 1 egg, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pumpkin puree and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable oil. Add liquids to flour mixture; stir just enough to mix. If desired stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of either chopped nuts, dried cranberries or raisins. Spoon batter into greased or paper-lined medium muffin pan. Bake in preheated 400 degree F oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until top springs back when touched. Makes 1 dozen. These freeze well and are perfect for packed lunches.

MY FAVOURITE PUMPKIN PIE

In large bowl whisk together 2 eggs, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups pumpkin puree, 1 cup light cream or evaporated milk, 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups brown sugar, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice (see Quick Tip below) and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt. Pour into an unbaked deep 9-inch pie shell. Bake in preheated 450 degree F oven for 15 minutes, then lower oven temperature to 350 degrees F and bake for 45 to 50 more minutes or until knife inserted into the centre of the filling comes out clean. For best flavour, make a day ahead and refrigerate. Serve cold with sweetened whipped cream or vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt. (adapted slightly from The Laura Secord Cookbook)

PUMPKIN TARTS WITH MAPLE WHIPPED CREAM

For 1 dozen tarts, use $\frac{1}{2}$ the quantity of filling for Pumpkin Pie recipe above. Pour filling into 12 homemade or purchased tart shells. Bake in preheated 400 degree F oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until filling is set and pastry is golden. Serve cold topped with 1 cup whipping cream, whipped and sweetened with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup maple syrup.

Other Quick Tips

**** Make your own Pumpkin Pie Spice** by mixing together 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon, 1 tablespoon each: ground ginger and nutmeg and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cloves.

****Pureed pumpkin and squash are interchangeable in most recipes.**

** To avoid spilling the filling when placing a pumpkin pie in the oven, pour half of the filling into the pie shell, transfer pie to preheated oven then pour in remaining filling.

**Don't throw out the Jack o lantern! Cut the non-charred parts into chunks and rinse. Place in large pot; cover pumpkin with water; bring to boil. Cook over medium heat until pieces are tender. Drain well in colander. When cool enough to handle, remove skin and mash or puree the pulp. The flesh will not be as thick as sugar or pie pumpkin puree but will still be tasty and nutritious. If too thin on its own, mix half and half with pie pumpkin or pureed squash.