

## Crunch into Pumpkin Seed Benefits

While you can buy pumpkin seeds at your local grocery, you and your family may find it fun to make your own. Here's how: First, remove the seeds from the pumpkin's inner cavity and wash them off to remove clinging pulp that may be on them. Then, spread the seeds out evenly on a foil-lined cookie sheet to dry. After the seeds are dry, lightly spray the seeds with vegetable cooking spray or sprinkle them with olive oil and add seasonings of your choice – Worcestershire sauce, garlic, cajun seasoning, or hot spices. Place the tray in a preheated oven at 250°F for 10 to 15 minutes or until seeds are a light golden brown color. You may need to stir the seeds to make sure they don't burn. Once cooked, cool the seeds before eating or storing. Then, store them in an airtight container at room temperature up to three months or refrigerate up to one year.

### Here are ways to enjoy the health benefits of pumpkin seeds:

- ◆ Pack baked pumpkin seeds in your lunch for a crunchy snack.
- ◆ Add pumpkin seeds to sautéed vegetables or pasta dishes.
- ◆ Toss pumpkin seeds in your mixed green salad.
- ◆ Mix ground pumpkin seeds in your homemade breads or granola recipe.
- ◆ Grind pumpkin seeds with garlic, parsley, and other spices and mix with olive oil and lemon juice for a tasty salad dressing.
- ◆ Add some ground pumpkin seeds to your hamburger meat mixture.

Pamela Smith is a Registered Dietitian and nationally known radio and TV host. For more information, call 1-800-896-4010 or visit her website at [www.pamsmith.com](http://www.pamsmith.com). Her new book, *When Your Hormones Go Haywire*, provides natural solutions for women over 40.



## Serve Up a Slice of Health

**N**utritionists know that pumpkin does more than satisfy the taste buds. It also wins big for its nutritional values. A slice of pumpkin pie has up to three times the recommended daily value of beta-carotene plus the phytonutrients *lutein* and *zeaxanthin*.

Research indicates that a diet rich in foods containing beta-carotene may reduce the risk of developing certain types of cancer and offers protection against heart disease. Beta-carotene also offers protection against other diseases as well as some degenerative aspects of aging.

Pumpkins come from the same family as squash, gourds, cucumbers, and melons. The pulp, seeds, and flowers of a pumpkin are all edible and nutritious. In fact, the seeds of a pumpkin may help reduce the risk of prostate cancer. Many people use pumpkin to make breads and muffins, soups, and puddings. They can also be added to vegetable casseroles and risottos or stuffed in tortillas, wraps, or pita bread.

Pumpkins are a rich source of beta-carotene, which the body uses to make vitamin A. They also contain calcium, iron, folate, fiber, and vitamins C, K, and E. Another benefit of pumpkins is they're naturally low in salt, calories, and fat, and they taste good. Pumpkins



also have no cholesterol.

### Here are several helpful tips on cooking with pumpkin:

- Look for pumpkins that are unblemished and heavy for their size.
- To cook fresh pumpkin, try roasting, baking, or adding it to other dishes.
- To reduce the fat content of your pie, use fat-free canned milk.
- If you use whipped cream as a topping, select fat-free whipped cream.
- For more intense flavor in your pie, add a bit of extra spices such as nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves.
- Store fresh, cooked pumpkin properly. You can keep it in your refrigerator for about five days, or in the freezer for up to six months.

### PUMPKIN BREAD PUDDING

Makes 15 servings

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 2 cups skim milk                   | 1/3 cup dates, soaked in water, coarsely chopped    |
| 1 cup honey                        | 1 large carrot, grated                              |
| 1 can (16 oz.) unsweetened pumpkin | 1/2 loaf French bread, cubed                        |
| 1/2 tsp. ground ginger             | 2 Tbsp. fat-free frozen yogurt, thawed, per serving |
| 1-1/2 tsp. cinnamon                | 1 tsp. pourable fruit (purchased), per serving      |
| 2 egg whites, slightly beaten      | Sliced fruit for garnish                            |
| 2 tsp. vanilla                     |   |



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix together milk, honey, pumpkin, spices, egg whites, vanilla, dates, and grated carrot. Place bread cubes in a 9x13-inch pan sprayed with cooking spray. Pour liquid mixture over bread cubes. Cover pan with foil and bake for 35 minutes. Remove foil and bake an additional 10 minutes or until browned on top. Cut into 15 squares. To serve, place a square on a plate or in a sundae glass. Spoon on 2 Tbsp. frozen yogurt as sauce. Garnish with fruit and drizzle with 1 tsp. all-fruit syrup.

From Pamela Smith's *Eat Well, Live Well*. Visit [www.pamsmith.com](http://www.pamsmith.com) for more information.

Each serving contains: 154 calories, 3.5 g. protein, 0 g. fat, 0 mg. cholesterol, 34 g. carbohydrates, 130 mg. sodium. Calories from fat 0 percent

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