

THIS SEASON'S FAVOURITE - THE WONDERS OF THE PUMPKIN

Posted on October 24, 2018



The famous pumpkin

Pumpkin is such a wonderful vegetable – it looks fantastic with its vibrant orange and unmistakable shape. Pumpkins have been written about, made it onto the big screen and brought to life in carvings of all kinds of weird and wonderful shapes and characters for more than a hundred years! Our beloved pumpkin is a true representation of autumn and the transition into the darker months.

Full of goodness

Not only do pumpkins look great they also taste great and are full of wonderful vitamins and minerals. Pumpkin is equally delicious in curries, soups and casseroles as it is in desserts (but, of course, the sugars in most sweet pies will outweigh the nutritional benefits, so keep this in moderation).

Pumpkin is low in calories, alkalising and rich in antioxidants which help reduce inflammation and keep us well. It is rich in vitamin A (which helps strengthen and protect our cells) and vitamin C (which is essential for wound healing and skin integrity, as well as immune system function). Pumpkin is also rich in potassium and magnesium which are both great for heart health and bone health. It also contains lutein and zeaxanthin, which promote eye health.

Our friendly pumpkin is also full of fibre which can help ease constipation and promote digestive health.

The field pumpkin, which is most commonly used to carve jack-o'-lanterns, has watery, stringy flesh and is not recommended for eating. Sugar pumpkins and cheese pumpkins are two widely available varieties that are good for cooking and baking, thanks to their dense, sweet flesh.

Pumpkin, chilli and coconut soup from The Hairy Bikers

A warming winter soup; the kick of ginger and chilli is set off by soothing coconut milk. If you can't get hold of pumpkin, try butternut squash.

This meal, if served as six portions, provides 177kcal, 3g protein, 14g carbohydrate (of which 8g sugars), 11g fat (of which 10g saturates), 3.5g fibre and trace salt per portion.

Ingredients

- 1 medium pumpkin, or butternut squash
- 1 large white onion, chopped
- 2.5cm/1in piece of root ginger, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ Scotch bonnet chilli, seeds removed, chopped
- 4–5 sprigs thyme
- 400ml/14fl oz coconut milk
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- breadfruit or sweet potato chunks, to taste (optional)

Method

1. Cut the pumpkin in half, then into wedges. Peel and deseed each wedge and cut the pumpkin flesh into 2.5cm/1in cubes.
2. Put the pumpkin in a large pan with the onion, ginger, garlic and chilli. Strip the leaves from the thyme and add to the pan.
3. Pour in about 400ml/14fl oz of water, bring to the boil and cook until the pumpkin has turned to a pulp.
4. Add the coconut milk and season to taste with salt, then reduce the heat and leave the soup to simmer for another 5–10 minutes.
5. If you like, add chunks of breadfruit or sweet potato towards the end of the cooking. Serve hot in bowls.