

Pumpkin Soup

Overview

The month of October marks the beginning of pumpkin season. Pumpkins are an excellent source of beta-carotene and are fun to cook with. Instead of incorporating pumpkins into the usual 'indulgent' dishes such as pumpkin pie or pumpkin loaf, try opting for this 'lighter-fare' pumpkin soup that will allow you to enjoy this popular fall fruit without feeling guilty about having seconds!

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup of water
- 1 small onion chopped
- 1 can (8 oz) pumpkin puree
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 cup milk
- 1/8 tsp ground pepper
- 1 green onion chopped



Directions

- In a large saucepan, heat 1/4 cup of water over medium heat.
- Add the onion and cook until tender - about 3 minutes.
- Add remaining water, pumpkin, broth, cinnamon and nutmeg.
- Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes.
- Stir in milk and cook until hot. Don't boil!
- Ladle into bowl and garnish with black pepper and green onion.

Serves 4

Nutrition Information

- Pumpkin puree provides an excellent source of vitamin A and is naturally low in sugar.
- This recipe is low in fat, with less than one gram as saturated fat.

Serving Size=1 cup

Calories	72	Cholesterol	1 mg
Protein	3 g	Sodium	241 mg
Carbohydrates	12 g	Fibre	2 g
Total fat	1 g	Potassium	199 mg
Saturated fat	<1 g	Calcium	78 mg

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-recipes/>

BETA-CAROTENE

Introduction

- Carotenoids are plant pigments that give fruits and vegetables some of their distinct, bright colours.
- Beta-carotene, also known as pro-vitamin A, is a type of carotenoid and it is responsible for the vibrant red and orange colours found in some plant foods.
- When we consume foods with beta-carotene, the provitamin A gets converted into the functional vitamin A which is required by our bodies for vision, bone growth, skin maintenance and normal cell function.

Beta-carotene and cancer

- It is widely accepted that beta-carotene acts as an anti-oxidant.
- An anti-oxidant is a substance that can help protect cells in the body from free radicals, which are highly reactive and unstable molecules that cause cell and/or DNA damage.
 - ◆ This damage may be associated with increased risk for cancer, heart disease, cataracts, and other diseases that occur with age.
 - ◆ Anti-oxidants are thought to be able to slow down or even prevent this damage from occurring.
- Unfortunately, beta-carotene has been shown to induce some negative effects on certain populations.
 - ◆ In the mid-nineties, two studies demonstrated that beta-carotene (when supplemented as 20mg or more a day) increased the rates of lung cancer and death in individuals who smoked a pack of cigarettes or more per day and those who had smoked in the past.
 - ◆ It is important to understand that people taking beta-carotene supplements who are non-smokers and live a healthy lifestyle have not shown to be affected by this cancer-promoting phenomenon.
- How is it that such a widely accepted 'cancer-fighting' nutrient can become 'cancer-promoting' in certain populations?
 - ◆ The answer is still unclear, but the controversy highlights some of the potential problems with taking doses of vitamins that are much larger than what is naturally found in foods.

The take-home message

- It is widely agreed among health care professionals that supplementation of large doses of any vitamin or mineral may react in an unpredictable and potentially harmful way.
 - ◆ To avoid mega-dosing, vitamins and minerals should be obtained from their natural food sources instead of being consumed in the form of a supplement.
- The good news is that there is no question that the beta-carotene found naturally in foods, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, squash, spinach and apricots, is the best source of pro-vitamin A and will contribute to an overall healthy and balanced diet.
- Try to include one dark green leafy vegetable and one bright orange fruit or vegetable each day and you'll be getting your daily dose of beta-carotene, as well as countless other vitamins, minerals and disease-fighting antioxidants.