

SEASONAL COOKING

PUMPKIN AIN'T JUST FOR PIE ANYMORE

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This time of year yields the most amazing varieties of pumpkins. I love the nontraditional ones that range in color and shape. However, I am rather sick of the pumpkin recipes that currently exist. It seems as if it is always the same old same old. I wrote the following recipes purposely trying to avoid pie, dessert, gnocchi or curry. I headed out with an open mind and heart to search for pumpkins at the farmers market. I picked ugly ones. I picked pretty ones. I cooked, roasted, mashed, steamed and puréed. I fed my family pumpkin every day for several weeks and finally came up with these four ideas. These recipes all work very well for the holidays or a party as they can be made ahead—something I appreciate because I have a catering company. I made all four of the recipes here with less than two pumpkins that were each half the size of a basketball. So run out to your local farm and grab a basket of pumpkins. They will keep just fine in a cool, dark area for weeks and weeks. In the end I used Cinderella and New England Pie Pumpkin varieties because that is what my friend was selling. Go local!

Photo by Carole Topalian



PUMPKIN MUSHROOM POT STICKERS

This is really a fun and different way to use any extra pumpkin you have. I like to make these up ahead of time and freeze them for a quick dinner, snack or special party food. This is a great food that is gluten- and dairy-free as well as vegan. To make the purée I peel the pumpkin with a Y-shaped vegetable peeler, scoop it out and cut it into 2-inch chunks. Sprinkle the pieces with salt and roast in a 425°F. until very soft. Let it cool and purée it in a food processor. Pumpkin can be frozen this way for later use.

Yields about 45 pot stickers

- 10 shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and sliced
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 cup pumpkin purée (fresh is best but canned may be substituted)
- 1 leek, cleaned* (see below)
- ½ teaspoon salt, plus extra for sprinkling
- 3 drops sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon sweet chili sauce (I like Mae Ploy brand)
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- 1 package premade wonton wrappers

Sear mushrooms in a pan with 1 teaspoon vegetable oil. Set aside in a large bowl. Sprinkle leeks with extra salt and cook them in the other teaspoon of vegetable oil until very soft and starting to brown. Add them to the mushrooms and set aside.

Add the pumpkin purée, ½ teaspoon salt, sesame oil and sweet chili sauce to

the mushroom-leek mixture. Using a microplane or other small grater, grate in the garlic. Mix well.

Place 1 teaspoon of the mixture in a wonton wrapper. Be careful not to overfill; less is best. Lightly moisten 2 sides of the wrapper and pinch shut into a triangle shape with your fingers or a wonton press. Continue this until all wrappers are filled. (You can freeze them in a single layer on a sheet tray for 24 hours and then put them in a zip-top bag for later use. They will keep this way for about 3 months).

To cook them, heat a nonstick pan (I like to use a ceramic-coated frying pan) over medium-low heat until very hot, add 1 teaspoon of oil or spray with nonstick spray. Place as many pot stickers as will fit in a single layer in the pan. Cook 2–3 minutes to brown, then flip them over to brown the other side. Once both sides are browned, add 2 tablespoons of water to the pan. Wait until the water has evaporated and serve with dipping sauce.

Dipping Sauce

- 1 tablespoon soy sauce or tamari
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Grade B maple syrup
- 1 clove garlic, peeled

Add soy sauce, vinegar and maple to a small dish. Grate garlic into mixture. Stir and serve with wontons.

* To clean a leek I like to cut the tough green top off. Then cut the leek in half lengthwise and then cut the halves into 1-inch pieces that end up looking like half circles. Put these pieces in a large bowl and fill with cold water. Separate the leek pieces and swish around aggressively in the water. The clean leeks will float and the dirt will sink. Carefully scoop the leeks out and place in a colander to drain, leaving the dirty water behind in the bowl.

PUMPKIN SUSHI

I need to use more pumpkin. I need to eat more sushi. I remembered this delicious sushi I once had that had sweet potato in it along with other spicy items. I didn't order it because I tend to go for fish when eating sushi but my friend did. I was wrong. It was sweet and creamy and lovely next to spicy. This recipe was born. Feel free to cut this recipe in half.

Yields 70 pieces of sushi roll

3 cups sushi rice (prepared as directed on package), cooled down to room temperature

10 sheets dried nori

1 small fresh pumpkin, peeled, seeded and cut into ½-inch-thick logs, the longer the better but no more than ½ inch thick. You will need about 20 logs. I was able to get this many from ¼ of a small pumpkin. I puréed the rest of the pumpkin to make Pumpkin Mushroom Pot Stickers or freeze for later use.

1 cucumber, peeled, cut in half lengthwise, seeded and cut into ½-inch sticks about 3 inches long

Scallion greens, sliced long and thin

Black or toasted sesame seeds (optional)

Spicy mayo (see below), soy sauce, wasabi paste and pickled ginger

Roast the pumpkin in a single layer on a well-greased sheet until brown and tender,



about 20 minutes; let cool. Place a nori sheet on a bamboo mat that is well wrapped in plastic wrap. Have a cup of cold water on your workspace. Using wet fingers, spread a thin layer of rice on most of the nori sheet, leave a 1-inch space at the top of the sheet with no rice on it (this will be where you seal the roll). If your fingers become sticky, moisten them again and continue. Sprinkle the sesame seeds lightly over the rice. At the bottom of the sheet lay 2 logs of pumpkin, side by side across the rice. Do the same with the cucumber logs and scallion strips. Using the mat, roll the sushi away from you from the bottom toward the top into a tight roll. Use a bit of the water to wet the 1-inch strip left with no rice on it to seal the roll tight.

Lightly wet your knife to cut the roll into 6 to 8 clean pieces. Serve with spicy mayo, wasabi paste, soy sauce and pickled ginger.

Spicy Mayo:

½ cup plain mayonnaise

1 teaspoon hot sauce, Sriracha is most commonly used

1 small clove garlic

5 drops sesame oil

Place all ingredients in a bowl and grate the garlic in. Stir well and serve with pumpkin sushi, pickled ginger, soy sauce and wasabi paste.

CINDERELLA PUMPKIN DIP

This dip takes its name from the variety of pumpkin used. Cinderella is an heirloom that is a beautiful deep burnt orange color with a flattened, squished pumpkin shape. This dip is very similar to guacamole! It was a fun recipe I developed for a wedding once in which the only nonlocal ingredients were olive oil, spices and salt. I needed a vegan dip that utilized only things from that farm's September harvest. I like to use one pumpkin for the dip and another one to serve it in.

Yields about 2 cups of dip

½ of a medium-sized Cinderella pumpkin (about 1 pound), peeled, seeded and cut into 3-inch cubes

1 small Cinderella pumpkin, hollowed out, ready to fill

1 clove fresh garlic, peeled and minced

1 teaspoon salt, plus more for sprinkling

1 teaspoon fresh cumin

½ teaspoon or several grinds fresh pepper

1 teaspoon vinegar (I like sherry, maple or apple cider varieties best for this recipe)

Pita bread for dipping



Sprinkle the pumpkin with salt and roast in the oven until very tender; let come to room temperature. Put pumpkin, garlic, salt, cumin, pepper and vinegar in food processor to purée. Use a bit of water to get a nice consistency for dip. Check seasonings, and then fill into hollowed pumpkin. Serve with fresh pita bread or tortilla chips.

PORK PUMPKIN STEW

This is a robust stew similar in texture to beef stew but a fun fall alternative. The great thing about this recipe is that it can be altered many ways. Add a few teaspoons of your favorite curry powder or paste or substitute coconut milk for the stock.

Serves 8

2-3 pounds pork shoulder

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

2 teaspoons kosher salt

½ cup fresh apple cider

½ cup all-purpose flour

1 onion, peeled and quartered

5 cloves garlic, peeled

4 small red potatoes, scrubbed and cut in half

3 stalks celery, washed and cut into 1-inch chunks

1 pound of pumpkin, peeled, seeded and cut into 2-inch chunks (about ½ a small pumpkin)

7 baby carrots, scrubbed

1 apple, peeled and cored

1 leek, cleaned and cut into 1-inch chunks

1 quart pork or chicken stock

5 shakes hot sauce (not enough to make it hot, just enough to add depth)

Salt both sides of pork and sear in vegetable

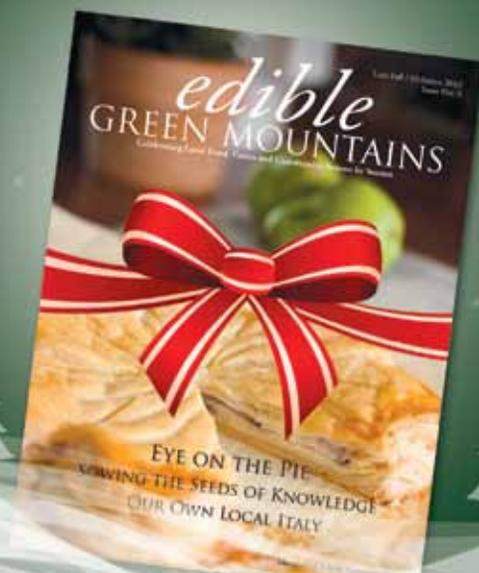
oil until all sides are well browned and place in a Crock-Pot. Deglaze pan with cider and add juices to Crock-Pot. Sprinkle flour over meat and juices. Add onion, garlic, potatoes, celery, pumpkin, carrots, apple and leek to Crock-Pot. Pour stock over top, add hot sauce and place lid on Crock-Pot. Set to high for 6 hours, until pork is very easy to pull apart. Serve with crusty bread, rice, wide egg noodles or other grain.



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