



Cooked Pumpkin

Two pounds of fresh pumpkin with skin, seeds, and fiber removed, makes approximately 2 cups of cooked pumpkin

Pumpkin is a winter squash that has been cultivated for hundred and hundreds of years in the Southwest. It ranges in size from several inches to several feet and can be round or oblong in shape. The average cooking pumpkin is usually between 10 and 25 pounds. The meat, the seeds, and the pumpkin's blossoms all are edible and can be prepared in many different ways.

Pumpkin pulp is also sold in 16-ounce cans, which makes for a convenient substitute for fresh cooked pumpkin in recipes. Fresh pumpkin, however, always tastes better – making it worth the effort to make. I usually cook several pumpkins at a time when they are in season, puree the meat and then freeze it in plastic freezer bags for later use, that way I can enjoy it's delicious taste throughout the remainder of the year.

Directions

1. Cut the pumpkin into halves or quarters depending on the size of the pumpkin. Remove the seeds and fibers. Place the halves or quarters on a baking sheet with the cut side down. This seals in the moisture from the pumpkin and allows it to steam while it is baking, making for moister pumpkin meat. The seeds can be also be roasted in the oven and make a delicious and healthy snack.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. and bake the pumpkin for 45 minutes, until it is tender. The pumpkin meat should be soft when you touch it with a fork.
3. Remove the pumpkin from the oven and allow it to cool. When the pumpkin has cooled, scrape the flesh from the skin. Discard or compost the skins. Place the meat in a food processor and purée. Run through a sieve to remove any remaining fibers and use the pumpkin according to recipe instructions. If you have done a good job scraping the meat from the skins and there are no fibers you can omit this step.

* NOTE: Cooked pumpkin will keep about 1 week in a non-metal, covered container in the refrigerator and several months in the freezer.

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