Solano Family & Children's Services, Child and Adult Care Food Program

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Nutrition Nuggets

Carve or Cook Pumpkins

As the air begins to turn cool and crisp, and the leaves start to change colors, those are strong indications that fall has arrived. One staple of fall are pumpkins. There are so many hands-on activities that you can do with your children using pumpkins. First, where do we find these marvelously colored and curved members of the Cucurbita family? Some will grow them in their vegetable gardens, or if you prefer to let someone else grow them, you can simply go and purchase some at a farm or pumpkin patch.

Carve

A carving pumpkin needs to have a nice shape, usually a fairly smooth surface as that is easier to carve, and a nicely balanced bottom so it will sit without rolling over. Pick one with skin hard enough to protect it but allows you to get a knife through. Some recommend poking gently with a fingernail which should not cause the skin to crack if it's "right." Tall, oblong varieties tend to be stringier inside, which could make the pumpkin more difficult to carve. For smaller hands, smaller pumpkins, such as "Baby Bear" or "Baby Boo" (a white variety) are charming and make great decorations. Once carved, a cool spot out of direct sunlight will keep the pumpkin fresher for a longer period, or the carved pumpkin can be sprayed with an anti-transparent like Wilt-Pruf. For the younger children, if carving is not an option, try letting them paint their pumpkins. Carving kits and paint can be found at your local stores.

Cook

If you plan to use the knife to turn pumpkin into pie, bread, muffins, or the like, then consider using a smaller variety pumpkin in the 4-8 lb. range. These usually have denser flesh, smoother texture, and higher sugar content. Several variety names have come to be synonymous with "pie pumpkins" – "New England Pie Pumpkin," "Autumn Gold," and "Baby Pam" are just a few. Pumpkin seeds can be roasted and eaten, with some varieties being studied for their ability to promote prostrate health.

Carving pumpkins is a fun and creative activity to do with children. Collecting the seeds or even using parts of the pumpkin for cooking or baking is a great way to find multiple uses for pumpkins while incorporating into healthy recipes. This holiday season, enjoy the bounty of autumn in pumpkins whichever way you please.

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Pumpkin Bread

1 2/3 cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon of salt
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 large eggs, room temperature
1/2 cup canola oil
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 1/2 cups of sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup canned pumpkin
1/2 cup of water
1/2 cups of raisins

Preheat oven to 350°. Combine dry ingredients. Whisk together eggs, pumpkin, oil and water; stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fold in walnuts and, if desired, raisins. Pour into a greased 9x5-in loaf pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 65—70 minutes. Cool in pan for 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack.

www.tasteofhome.com

Healthy and Fun Candy Alternatives to Hand out for Halloween

If your kids participate in Trick or Treating, they will likely collect huge quantities of candy. Sugary treats may be every kids' dream, but it can also be a nightmare for health-conscious parents. Apart from sugar, candy often contains nuts and other allergens and even the most responsible child might not remember to check the small print before digging into their bounty. So, instead of going with the flow and handing out the usual Halloween fare, you can give out non-candy treats that kids (and parents) will love. There are lots of creative, educational, and fun giveaways that will last long after the holiday ends. Here are a few ideas.

- Spooky pencils or erasers
- Real fruit juice boxes
- Stickers
- Mini pretzels or crackers
- Crayon packs
- Hot chocolate packets
- Mini Playdough
- Bubbles
- Glow bracelets

www.goodnet.org

KidKare Training

Whether or not you are a new or seasoned provider, you may feel like you need training or a refresher course on how to input and submit your daily meals and monthly claims on KidKare. The Food Program will be giving a brief training on KidKare basics during SFCS's monthly Snack & Chat. If you are interested, please join us on Wednesday October 20th from 6:30-8:30 p.m. To register, please visit our website, select providers, select provider's workshops, and then click on the "Eventbrite" logo at the bottom of the page.