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Not Just for Carving

Pumpkins had a place on our tables long before they were sitting on our porches. Hard-skinned, orange-fleshed squashes were a mainstay of the early Native American diet and can be a tasty, nutritious part of contemporary dishes. They are low in calories, virtually fat free and packed with potassium, vitamin A, dietary fiber and cancer-fighting beta-carotene. Jack o' lantern pumpkins have watery, stringy pulp so it's best to save those for carving and use firm, bright-colored pumpkins, like the sugar, cheese, and pie varieties.

Pumpkin Bundt Cake

Canola oil cooking spray
1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
1½ tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ground ginger
1/4tsp. ground cloves
1/4 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp. salt
1 large egg
1 large egg white
3/4 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
1 cup low-fat buttermilk
1/2 cup reduced-fat sour cream
1 cup canned unsweetened pumpkin purée
Confectioners' sugar, optional, for decoration

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Coat 8-cup bundt cake or tube pan liberally with canola oil cooking spray.

In large mixing bowl, combine two flours, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, nutmeg and salt. Make a well in center and set aside.

In another bowl, whisk egg and white to combine. Add sugar and whisk until dissolved. Add buttermilk, sour cream and pumpkin, whisking to combine all wet ingredients. Pour wet ingredients into center of bowl of dry ingredients and, using flexible spatula, mix until they are just combined and still slightly lumpy. Scoop batter into prepared baking pan.

Bake cake in center of oven for 70-75 minutes, until surface is browned and straw inserted into center comes out clean and nearly dry. Do not worry about cracks on the surface.

Set baked cake on wire rack and cool for 5 minutes. Run thin knife around center post and inside edge of pan. Set plate over pan and, holding in place, invert so cake drops onto plate. Cool completely.

If desired, sprinkle cake lightly with confectioners' sugar before serving.

Makes 12 servings.

Per serving: 170 calories, 2.5 g total fat (1 g saturated fat), 33 g carbohydrate, 5 g protein, 2 g dietary fiber, 210 mg sodium.