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Perfect Pumpkin Seeds

After the pumpkin is carved, seeds can be seasoned and toasted to make a delicious, crunchy snack. Pumpkin seeds are an excellent source of magnesium and also supply some protein and fiber. They're also among the nuts and seeds highest in phytosterols, natural plant compounds that may help lower blood cholesterol levels. This recipe relies on autumn staples like ginger, cinnamon and chili powder for a deliciously sweet and spicy combination.

Sweet Hot Pumpkin Seeds with Autumn Spices

Canola oil spray

1 cup pumpkin seeds (scooped whole from the pumpkin then washed and dried and pre-toasted for 30 minutes in a 300-degree oven; or hulled, prepackaged from the grocery store)

4 tsp. walnut oil (olive oil may be substituted)

1 tsp. ground ginger

Pinch cloves

1/2 tsp. cinnamon

1/2 tsp. chili powder or paprika (optional)

1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. dark brown sugar

Dash salt

2 tsp. water

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Lightly coat baking sheet with canola oil spray. Either pre-toast whole seeds from pumpkin (as noted above), or spread hulled seeds on pan in one layer and toast in oven for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in small skillet, whisk together oil, spices, sugar, salt and water. Simmer on low heat, stirring occasionally, until seeds finish toasting.

Remove seeds from oven and stir into spice mixture, coating evenly, and cook on stove for another 5 minutes. Return seeds to baking sheet, patting into one layer. Bake about 10 minutes, until crisp.

Remove from oven, let cool and gently loosen from baking sheet with tip of metal spatula. Store in a tightly covered container.

Makes 8 servings (2 tablespoons each).

Per serving: 180 calories, 14 g total fat (2.5 g saturated fat), 6 g carbohydrates, 9 g protein, 1 g dietary fiber, 160 mg sodium.