



HCSF Newsletter



October
2011

October is a perfect time to take advantage of warm days and crisp, cool nights. Get out and enjoy sunny fall days with family bike rides, walks, trips to the park, apple orchard or pumpkin patch. Warm everyone up at supper time with our hearty fall chili. Check out the latest information on which types of TV programs your little ones should avoid. Get them moving with some fun Halloween games instead! Give new meaning to “finger” food with our spooktacular Halloween snack you can set out on the big day!

‘WHAT IS IT & WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?’ PUMPKIN EDITION

They’re for more than just jack-o-lanterns!

Use any of the methods below to transform an uncooked pumpkin into puree. You can refrigerate your fresh pumpkin puree for up to three days, or store it in the freezer up to six months, so you can enjoy fall pumpkins for months to come in chilis, soups, bread and yes, pie!

Choose small pie pumpkins for puree.



Baking Method: Cut the pumpkin in half and discard the stem section and stringy pulp. Save the seeds to dry and roast later. In a shallow baking dish, place the two halves face down and cover with foil. Bake in a preheated 375 degrees F oven for about 1½ hours for a medium-sized sugar pumpkin, or until tender. Once the baked pumpkin has cooled, scoop out the flesh and puree or mash it.

Boiling Method: Cut the pumpkin in half, discarding the stringy insides. Peel the pumpkin and cut it into chunks. Place in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil and cook until the pumpkin chunks are tender. Let the chunks cool, and then puree the flesh in a food processor or mash it with a potato masher.

Microwave Method: Cut the pumpkin in half, discarding the stringy insides. Microwave on high power for seven minutes per pound, turning pieces every few minutes to promote even cooking. Process as above.

Hearty Halloween Chili

No one will ever know there is pumpkin in this chili (unless you tell them)! The pumpkin provides a nice texture, but isn’t noticeable in the taste. Promise!!

Ingredients:

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium Boppin Bell Pepper (any color), chopped
- 2 Tablespoons olive or canola oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups chicken broth or water
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 lb ground turkey or venison
- 1 can (15 ounces) solid-pack pumpkin
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 tsp each cumin, paprika and chili powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon salt



Directions: In a large skillet, add 2 Tablespoons oil and turn heat to medium. Add the onion and pepper and saute in oil until tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Transfer onion and pepper into a slow cooker. Don’t wipe the pan out after you remove the veggies. Add the ground turkey or venison and cook until no longer pink. Transfer meat to a slow cooker; stir in the remaining ingredients (broth, beans, tomatoes, pumpkin and spices). Cover and cook on low for 1 hour or until heated through. *No slow cooker?* No problem! Just transfer all the ingredients to a large pot and cook on the stove.

“Finger” Food

Ingredients

- Mozzarella string cheese
- Green bell pepper
- Cream cheese/peanut butter



Instructions

Wearing sandwich bags over your hands to keep the cheese as smudge-free as possible, use a paring knife (**parents only, please**) to cut each string cheese in half and then carve a shallow area for a fingernail just below the rounded end of each half.

Mark the joint right below the nail as well as the knuckle joint by carving out tiny horizontal wedges of cheese, as pictured. For the fingernails, slice a green bell pepper into thin strips.

Cut the strips into ragged-topped nail shapes and stick them in place at the ends of the fingers with dabs of cream cheese. Enjoy!



Halloween Games for a Gang

First, find some mood music. A CD of Halloween-themed songs works well, but any music will do! With luck, your Halloween CD will include “The Monster Mash” so you can turn your restless crowd into dance sensations.

Start the music and have an adult be the "caller"/demonstrator for these steps:

- 4 “Igor-steps” (hunch over step-drags) to the right
- 4 to the left
- 4 to the right
- 4 to the left



Repeat with “Frankensteins” (stiff-legged, arms extended)

And then “Count Draculas” (bury nose in crook of elbow, bend low, jump up and yell Boo!)

Keep the fun going by starting again with the “Igor”.

Does your CD also have the Ghostbusters theme? That’s the perfect background to Ghostbuster Tag!



Choose up to three kids to be the “ghostbusters”, depending on the size of your crowd (and change them now and then so everyone gets a chance). Give your “ghostbusters” something harmless to tag the ghosts with: like a paper towel tube “wand”. The rest of the players are ghosts flying around the room/house/yard. When a ghost is tagged, she freezes in a crouch. She can be freed if another ghost touches her head and “flies” around her two times.



TV Tidbits

Did you know that the *type* of shows kids watch – even cartoons – can affect their ability to concentrate, learn and behave?

Fast-paced shows with lots of action and crazy, unrealistic situations (think *Sponge Bob Squarepants* and *Animaniacs*) can *over-stimulate* kids and can create unrealistic expectations of how the world around them works.

TV can help kids learn; expose them to new ideas and experiences and entertain them – but it’s up to us to choose programs wisely! *Sesame Street*, *Blues Clues*, *Caillou* and *Dora the Explorer* are all examples of shows that can educate and entertain! Older kids might enjoy nature programs and programs that teach skills (like cooking or fishing shows) over cartoons!



BOOOOO

