

# **.: PUMPKIN MUFFINS .:**

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## **.: Origins and History .:**

The word pumpkin comes from the Greek word *pepon* which means “large melon”. Although the origin of pumpkins is unknown, they are thought to have originated from North America. The oldest record of pumpkins come from seeds found in Mexico dating between 7000 and 5500 B.C. Native Americans would dry strips of pumpkin and weave them into mats. Colonists were the first to make pumpkin pie by removing the seeds and filling the insides with milk, spices, and honey.

## **.: Anatomy of the Pumpkin .:**

In this recipe, we are eating the “rind” or ovary of the pumpkin. Pumpkins are a kind of berry fruit and have compound ovaries that contain multiple seeds. The outer layer of the ovary (pericarp) is usually removed, we eat the fleshy mesocarp, and the slimy fibrous tissue around the seeds is the endosperm. The flowers and seeds are also edible.

## **.: Nutritional Highlights .:**

The flesh of a pumpkin is rich beta-carotene, which is an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent, and in alpha-carotene, which is believed to slow aging and prevent cataract formation. Pumpkin flesh is very low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Pumpkins also contain Vitamin E, panthothenic acid, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and copper. Pumpkins are especially known to be an excellent source of dietary fiber, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, iron and manganese. Pumpkins have been known to reduce the risk of macular degeneration, a serious eye problem than usually results in blindness.

## **.: Recipe for Pumpkin Muffins .:**

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder 1 cup canned solid-pack pumpkin (from a 15 ounce can)  
1/3 cup vegetable oil\*  
2 large eggs  
1 teaspoon pumpkin-pie spice  
1 1/4 cups plus 1 tablespoon sugar\*\*  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Put oven in middle position and preheat oven to 350°F. Put liners in muffin cups.

Whisk together pumpkin, oil, eggs, pumpkin pie spice, 1 1/4 cups sugar, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl until smooth, then whisk in flour mixture until just combined.

Stir together cinnamon and remaining 1 tablespoon sugar in another bowl.

Divide batter among muffin cups (each should be about three-fourths full), then sprinkle tops with cinnamon-sugar mixture. Bake until puffed and golden brown and wooden pick or skewer inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool in pan on a rack five minutes then transfer muffins from pan to rack and cool to warm or room temperature.