

# Vegetable Main Dish Recipes Vol. 8

## Pumpkin is a Nutritious Super-vegetable!

Pumpkin has a long shelf life and can be used for main dishes, side dishes, or desserts. The  $\beta$ -carotene contained in its brilliant, yellow pulp is rich in nutrition, making it a powerhouse for maintaining good health. Typical pumpkins sold in Japan are harvested from summer through autumn, but continued ripening for about two additional months removes the water content and transforms the starch into sugar, giving them a soft and flaky texture.

By Makiko Hei

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### Nutritional Value of Pumpkin

Pumpkins are rich in  $\beta$ -carotene, which changes to vitamin A as needed after it is ingested.

Vitamin A is a nutrient needed to maintain the health of eye functions and skin mucosa, and helps boost the immune system as well. Unaltered  $\beta$ -carotene also demonstrates antioxidant properties, which may help prevent arterial sclerosis, cancer, and other lifestyle diseases.

In addition to vitamin A, we want to mention other nutrients abundant in pumpkins—vitamin C and vitamin E—which also have strong antioxidant effects. We can expect the synergistic effects of these vitamins in sustaining antioxidant action, keeping skin looking youthful, and providing anti-aging properties. In addition, pumpkin is believed to help relieve high blood pressure, because its potassium content adjusts the water balance of the body and eliminates excessive salt to maintain normal blood pressure. Removing excess salt from the body also reduces swelling.

However, be careful not to eat too much pumpkin, because it has a higher sugar content than other vegetables.

### How to choose pumpkin

Choose pumpkins that have shiny, elastic skin and feel heavy in your hand. If a pumpkin has been ripened after picking, and the stem is dried out and the area

around it is dented, that means it's time to eat this one.

When selecting pre-cut pumpkins, choose those with closely packed seeds and brilliantly colored flesh.

### How to store pumpkins

Cut pumpkin should be wrapped in newspaper and stored for one to two months in a cold, dark place. The insides of cut pumpkins spoil easily, so remove seeds and pulp from them, wrap them, store them in the refrigerator, and use them within three or four days.

You can store pumpkins for almost two weeks if you cut them according to the recipe you're using and freeze them. In this case, to prevent oxidization caused by drying, wrap them in plastic film, put them in a freezer bag, squeeze out the air, and seal them. If you thaw frozen pumpkin before cooking, the color and texture will deteriorate, so use it right out of the freezer.



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# Chinese-style Steamed Pumpkin and Pork

You can take in fat-soluble vitamins A and E by combining pumpkin and pork. And excess fat can be eliminated by steaming. This is a dish that's full of benefits.

**Cooking time: 25 minutes**

**[Ingredients]** (3~4 servings)

1/4 pumpkin

8 pieces of pork belly (about 200g)

**(A) Chinese sauce**

1 tablespoon sake

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 teaspoon sugar

1 teaspoon Chinese chili bean sauce

1 tablespoon grated ginger

2 tablespoons ground white sesame

1 tablespoon sesame oil

1.5 teaspoons potato starch



## [How to cook]

1. Remove seeds and guts of pumpkin, and slice into eight 1cm-wide pieces with skin (you can peel off tough parts of the skin). Mix (A) sauce ingredients in a bowl.
2. Wrap a slice of pork belly around each piece of 1 pumpkin in a spiral. It's better to wrap pulling and stretching the pork belly as you wrap. Fasten the pork belly at each end of the pumpkin piece so it does not peel off. When all the pieces are wrapped, arrange them in a heat-proof dish so they do not overlap if possible and then pour (A) sauce over them in a circular motion to ensure complete coverage. (Arrange remaining pumpkin and pork in gaps between the wrapped pieces.)
3. Put the heat-proof dish into a steamer, and cook for about 15 minutes on medium-high heat.

2-1



2-2



3



## Tips

You can also cook this dish in a microwave oven. In this case, loosely cover the heat-proof dish with plastic film and cook for about 10 minutes at 600w. Then continue to cook until the meat is thoroughly done, checking it frequently.

## Pumpkin and Soy Milk Potage

The addition of spices help's balance the flavor of pumpkins, which are also used in desserts. We highly recommend adding a touch of curry powder!

Cooking time: 25 minutes

**[Ingredients]** (4 servings)

300g pumpkin (net weight)

100g onion (about ½ onion)

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 teaspoon curry powder

250cc water

250cc soy milk

1/2 teaspoon salt

Pepper as needed



### **[How to cook]**

1. Remove seeds and guts of pumpkin, and cut off tough parts of the skin, and cut into pieces for easy stir frying. Slice onion into 5mm pieces.

2. Put olive oil and sliced onions into a pan, cook over medium heat, add curry powder and pumpkin, and stir fry until the onion softens.

3. Add water to 2, cover, and let it simmer for about 10 minutes until the pumpkin softens.

4. Puree 3 in a blender, add soy milk, and season with salt and pepper. Serve in a bowl, and add a splash of olive oil (not included in recipe).



### **Profile**

#### **Makiko Hei**

I love vegetables. I try to handle them with care and cook them simply but luxuriously, with the motto “Let’s make our daily meals delicious regardless of the genre of the dishes!”

HP: <https://vege3.jp/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/makichanshokudo/>

\* The school teaches a careful approach to preparing of vegetables in ways to create glamorous vegetable dishes, with the motto “Love vegetables, make delicious daily meals.”

