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MICHELLE DUDASH DISH WITH DUDASH

Colorful, delicious jack-o'-lantern bowls surefire way to impress on Halloween



Serve jack-o'-lantern bowls on Halloween and you'll have your friends talking about this show-stopping dish for years to come.

The chicken and vegetables are delicious to eat on their own, or you could even serve a very thick chili in the pumpkins.

When you're shopping for pumpkins, aim for a uniform size for consistent cooking times. The key to easily carving the jack-o'-lanterns is using a small serrated edge tool that comes in any standard pumpkin-carving kit, which are widely available this time of year.

One of these satisfying bowls, which includes eating half of the actual pumpkin flesh, provides 4 grams of fiber and 32 grams of protein, with fewer than 350 calories per serving.

Michelle Dudash is a registered dietitian, chef and publisher of a clean-eating newsletter, DishwithDudash.com.

Jack-O'-Lantern Bowls With Chicken, Bell Pepper and Sage

Servings: 4 servings, 1 jack-o'-lantern each.
Prep time: 60 minutes.
Cook time: 60 minutes.

For the jack-o'-lanterns

- 4 small sugar pie pumpkins (about 4-5 inches tall) with stems intact
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the filling

- 4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breast or thighs, cut into bite-size pieces
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon poultry seasoning, divided
- 1 (8-ounce) container crimini mushrooms, quartered
- 1 small red bell pepper, diced
- 1 yellow small onion, diced
- 1 medium clove garlic, minced
- 1 cup tomato puree
- ½ cup shredded part-skin mozzarella cheese
- Roasted pumpkin seeds (optional)

To make the jack-o'-lanterns: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut out the stem end of the pumpkin, holding the blade at an inward angle to keep the lid from falling through, creating an opening large enough to eat out of with a fork, about 3-4 inches wide. Scoop out the seeds and pulp with a spoon. You can save the seeds for cooking later, if you wish. Using a washable marker, draw on the pumpkin's face that you wish to carve (see kitchen notes), then carve it using a pumpkin-cutting tool or small serrated edge knife. Place the pumpkins on a sheet pan, ideally lined with parchment paper or a silicone mat for easy release, placing the lids directly on the sheet pan. Brush the insides and outside with oil and sprinkle the insides with salt and pepper. Cover the pumpkins and lids loosely with aluminum foil to help them retain moisture. Bake until the inside of the pumpkins are fork-tender, about 30 minutes.

To make the filling: Heat a large skillet on medium and add 2 teaspoons oil. Add the chicken in a single layer and brown on one side, about 5 minutes, sprinkling with ½ teaspoon salt and pepper. Stir and brown the side of the chicken pieces, sprinkling in ¼ teaspoon poultry seasoning. Transfer to a plate.

Add remaining 2 teaspoons oil to the pan and add the mushrooms. Cook until water releases from the mushrooms, scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon. Add the peppers, onion and garlic and saute until tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato puree and cook until heated through. Stir in remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon poultry seasoning and pepper. Divide the filling among the cooked pumpkins, then sprinkle with cheese, leaving a bit around the front rim to create the appearance of hair. Bake uncovered until the cheese is completely melted and the bottom of the pumpkins are sizzling, about 20 minutes. To serve, sprinkle with roasted pumpkin seeds, if desired, and cover pumpkins with the lids.

Kitchen notes:
» Draw the face a bit higher than you normally would, so that the juices of the filling don't seep out of the mouth.

» You can prepare the pumpkin bowls and filling the day before serving. Fill the pumpkins right before baking.

Per serving: 320 calories, 13 g total fat (4 g saturated fat, 0 trans fat), 380 mg sodium, 78 mg cholesterol, 19 g total carbohydrate (4 g fiber), 32 g protein.

FROM MICHELLE DUDASH



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A fun and delicious meal: Jack O'Lantern Bowls (filled with chicken, bell pepper and sage) will have your friends amused and amazed. When you're shopping for pumpkins, aim for a uniform size for consistent cooking times.

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