

## PUMPKIN OR WINTER SQUASH BREAD (and some thoughts about pumpkins and baking)

by Margie Siegal

Any kind of winter squash (except spaghetti squash) will make decent pies, muffins or quick bread. Some kinds, of course, work better than others. The best Thanksgiving pies and holiday baking start the previous January, if you order your seeds from catalogs. Look for a notation in the seed description, "Makes excellent pies." The small pumpkin in the photo is a Winter Luxury pumpkin, which is sweet and flavorful, and has tender, not-stringy insides. Seed is available from either Territorial Seed or Johnny's Selected Seeds.

This quick bread has less sugar and fat than most recipes: It makes two loaves.

(dry ingredients)

2 ¼ cups (10 ounces) all purpose flour  
1 1/8 cup (5 ounces) whole wheat flour  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 ½ teaspoons baking spice mix

(wet ingredients)

4 tablespoons (2 ounces) butter, margarine or shortening  
¾ cup (5 ounces) brown sugar  
½ cup applesauce  
2 cups mashed pumpkin or winter squash  
2 eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 teaspoon crushed ginger root  
2 ounces sweet marsala or brandy (optional, but really good!)  
water to achieve proper consistency

(add ins)

1 cup walnut or pecans  
1 cup raisins or trail mix or chocolate chips

The easiest way to cook the squash is to cut it in half, scoop out the seedy innards, and either steam it, if you have a large steamer, or spray with oil spray and bake at 350 degrees until good and soft – a fork should go through easily. Let cool. Scoop out the edible part, mash, and, if you don't have a food processor, strain over a large holed strainer to get the lumps out.

If you want to kick your baking up a notch, weigh ingredients. If your scale has a tare function, you put the bowl on the scale, zero out the scale, add each ingredient in order, and zero out the scale after adding the correct weight of each ingredient. Inaccurate measurements leads to variation in results.

The easiest way to complete this recipe is with a food processor, that way you won't spend all evening mashing and straining squash and creaming the butter with the sugar. The processor does most of the work. You can often find food processors (and scales) in second hand shops.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add whatever add-ins you feel like using, and mix again.

Put the butter and sugar in the food processor and pulse until it has the consistency of Play-Doh. Or you can set to with a large fork and beat the two together. Then add the eggs, pulse until combined, then the applesauce, pumpkin, vanilla, and ginger. Pulse until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl if there are spots which are getting left out.

Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients slowly, stopping at several points and stirring until mostly combined. Add Marsala or brandy, a little at a time. Then add water, a little at a time. The dough should be drier than cake batter, but too wet to knead. When in doubt, make it a little wetter (see photo) The amount of water needed will vary with humidity and the type of squash. Mix just until all ingredients are incorporated.

Spray two bread pans with cooking spray. Scoop the batter into the pans, smooth over the top and bake for 50 minutes. A thin knife should come out clean. If not bake for another five minutes.

Let cool and enjoy!