Sweet potatoes, squash, pumpkin and carrots are true nutrition superstars. These powerhouse vegetables are loaded with carotenoids. Carotenoids give fruits and vegetables their yellow and orange color. Foods rich in carotenoids have been linked to a host of health-promoting and disease-fighting activities. Eating yellow/orange fruits and vegetables may help prevent cancer, keeps our heart healthy, helps maintain vision and may even slow down aging!

Eat squash, pumpkin and sweet potatoes as often as you can. They taste heavenly and deserve a place at the table.

Orange vegetables contain:
- Alpha-carotene
- Beta-carotene
- High fiber
- Low calories
- Vitamins C and E
- Potassium

Cookin’ Sweet Potatoes

**Baking:** Pierce the sweet potatoes with a fork before baking to let the steam escape. To speed clean up, place potatoes on a foil-lined baking sheet to catch juices that escape during cooking. Cooking time: 30 to 60 minutes in a 400°F oven, depending on size.

**Boiling:** If boiled whole, sweet potatoes do not need to be peeled. The skins will slip off easily when they are done, leaving most of the nutrients intact. The skin is edible, however, and supplies additional dietary fiber. Cooking time: for whole sweet potatoes, 15 to 35 minutes; for chunks, 15 to 20 minutes.

**Microwaving:** Pierce potatoes several times with a fork and place on a paper towel. Cooking time: for two medium sweet potatoes, five to nine minutes; for four, 10 to 13 minutes. After taking sweet potatoes out of the microwave, wrap in foil and let stand five to ten minutes.
No-Crust Pumpkin Pie

**Ingredients:**
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups canned pumpkin
- 2/3 cup brown or white sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 cup nonfat dry milk
- 1 cup water
- Oil or nonstick cooking spray

**Directions:**
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Except for water, mix all ingredients together in mixing bowl. Wash your hands after cracking eggs. Do not taste mixture because it contains raw eggs.
3. Slowly stir in 1 cup water. Mix well.
4. Pour into 2 greased 8-inch pie plates.
5. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until a knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool for 30 minutes before serving.
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of cooking, and eat within 2-3 days.

Pumpkin Soup

**Ingredients:**
- 1/2 cup finely minced onion
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 2 cans low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 can pumpkin puree
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons brown or white sugar
- 1 cup evaporated milk

**Directions:**
1. Saute onion in butter in a medium saucepan until tender. Add 1 can chicken broth; stir well. Bring to a boil; cover, reduce heat, and simmer 15 minutes.
2. Add remaining can of broth, pumpkin, salt, cinnamon, ginger, pepper and stir well.
3. Bring to a boil; cover reduce heat, and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Stir in evaporated milk and heat through. Do not boil.
5. Ladle into soup bowls.

Makes 6 cups.
Pumpkin Pancakes

**Ingredients:**
- Pancake Mix
- 1/2 cup or 1 cup pumpkin
- 1 or 2 teaspoon cinnamon

**Directions:**
1. Preheat griddle to 375 degrees or warm nonstick frying pan.
2. Make pancake mix according to directions. Add 1 teaspoon cinnamon for a small batch or 2 teaspoons cinnamon for larger batch.
3. Fold in 1/2 cup pumpkin for a small batch (7-8 pancakes,) 1 cup pumpkin for a larger batch (20 pancakes.)
4. Pour 1/4 cup batter per pancake onto lightly greased and preheated 375 degree griddle or fry pan.
5. Flip when pancakes are bubble and dry on the edges.

Sweet Potato Quesadilla

**Ingredients:**
- 4 cups sweet potatoes
- 1 1/2 cups onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 1/2 cumin (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 tortillas (whole wheat if available)
- 1 cup shredded low-fat cheddar cheese
- 1 cup black beans or pinto beans

**Directions:**
1. Boil or microwave sweet potatoes until soft.
2. Mash sweet potatoes with fork or potato masher.
3. Finely chop onions and garlic.
4. Saute’ onions until translucent. Stir in garlic and spices and cook another minute.
5. Add sweet potatoes and heat through.
6. Spread 1 cup sweet potato filling on tortilla. Spoon 1/4 cup black beans or pinto beans on tortilla. Spread 1/4 cup cheese on tortilla.
7. Spray pan or electric fry pan with nonstick cooking spray. Warm pan.
8. Heat tortilla in pan until tortilla becomes crisp.
9. Flip and heat the other side.
10. Serve with salsa.

Growing Squash

Consider growing winter squash for a family staple. If properly stored in a cool space, squash can last a few months. Squash grow on vines so you will want to allow enough space for the vines to spread. Butternut, acorn, butternut, and hubbard squash are common squashes grown in Minnesota. Seeds for eating varieties of pumpkin are also sold.
Sweet Potato Fries

Ingredients:
- 2 large sweet potatoes
- 1 Tablespoon canola oil (or vegetable oil)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Peel and cut each sweet potato in half lengthwise, and cut each half into 6 wedges. In a large bowl, combine the cut potatoes, oil, and salt.
3. On a baking sheet, arrange potatoes in a single layer and place on the middle shelf of the oven. Bake until edges are crisp and sweet potatoes are cooked through -- about 20—30 minutes.
4. Serve with a sprinkling of cinnamon sugar if desired.

Serves 4.

Microwaved Squash

Ingredients:
- Squash such as acorn, butternut or buttercup.
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 4 tablespoons brown sugar
- Salt and pepper

Directions:
1. Cut squash lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and discard.
2. Put 1 tablespoon margarine and 2 tablespoons brown sugar in center of each half.
3. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Cover each and place in a microwave dish.
5. Cook on high until tender. About 8 to 10 minutes. Acorn squash—5 minutes.
6. Scoop into a bowl and serve.
7. Refrigerate leftovers.

Pumpkin Pudding

Ingredients:
- 1 15 ounce can pumpkin
- 12 ounce can non-fat evaporated milk
- 1 small package vanilla sugar-free instant pudding
- 3/4 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 2 cups low-fat whipped topping (optional)
- graham crackers (optional)

Directions:
1. Combine milk, vanilla instant pudding together in a bowl. Let set 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the pumpkin and pumpkin pie spice. Chill at least another five minutes.
3. Top with whipped topping and crumbled graham cracker crumbs if desired.

Serves 6.