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Pumpkin Stew

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Makes 8 cups + pumpkin - 6 servings

Here's the perfect hearty meal for a crisp October evening. Cornbread and red wine complete this fresh palette of brilliant colors and earthy flavors. If you prefer, rather than baking the stew in a pumpkin, serve it in Roasted Acorn Squash Soup Bowls. You'll find the recipe [here](#).

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 ½ cups coarsely chopped onion
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 large tomatoes, cut into ½-inch cubes
1 red bell pepper, coarsely chopped
1 medium russet potato (about 10 ounces), peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
1 medium orange-fleshed sweet potato (about 12 ounces), peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes ([see Tip](#))
1 cup dried apple slices
2 cups vegetable stock plus more as needed
1 medium pumpkin (8 to 10 pounds)
2 tablespoons melted butter
½ teaspoon salt plus dash for pumpkin
½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper plus dash for pumpkin
One 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
¼ cup dry sherry

Heat the oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic; cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, bell pepper, potatoes, apples, and 2 cups vegetable stock. Increase the heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat; cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 325° F. Lightly oil a shallow baking pan large enough to accommodate the pumpkin. Slice off the top of the pumpkin, leaving about a 6-inch opening, and discard. Scoop out the seeds and stringy membranes, leaving the pumpkin flesh intact; brush the inside and top edge with the melted butter and sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper. Place the shell in the prepared baking pan.

Stir the stew and add the black beans, sherry, salt, and pepper. Pour the mixture into the pumpkin shell. Bake for about 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until the pumpkin flesh is fork-tender. (Thicker pumpkins will take longer, up to 1 ½ hours.)

Carefully transfer the pumpkin to a large bowl. (Take special care because the shell may be soft in places.) If the stew has become too thick to suit you, gently stir in some hot vegetable stock.

For each serving, use a large spoon to scoop out a wedge of cooked pumpkin; place in the bottom of a soup bowl. Top with the stew.

Advance preparation

Cook the stew on the stove early the day it is to be served; refrigerate in a covered container. Bake it in the pumpkin just before serving. Refrigerate the leftover soup and baked pumpkin flesh scooped from the shell in separate covered containers for up to 5 days; discard the pumpkin shell.

Variations

Rather than baking the stew in one large pumpkin, bake about 1 1/3 cups of the stew in each of 6 single-serving pumpkins, about 2 pounds and 6 inches in diameter. Reduce baking time to about 1 hour, or until the pumpkin flesh is fork-tender.

For a simpler presentation, rather than baking in a pumpkin, cook the stew on the stovetop, simmering uncovered until the desired consistency.



Paulette Mitchell, a culinary instructor, television personality, and the author of 10 cookbooks, is known internationally for her quick-to-prepare recipes with a gourmet flair. Her 15-Minute Gourmet cookbook series, including Chicken, Vegetarian, and Noodles, was awarded "Best Cookbook Series in the World" at the 2000 World Cookbook Fair in Périgueux, France in November, 2000. Her Complete Soy Cookbook was named "Best Health Cookbook" at the same event in 1998. To buy Paulette Mitchell's cookbooks, [click here](#).