

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Officially the calendar says that it is now Autumn. You can't quite tell by the weather, but the candy sections of the drug and grocery stores have been anticipating the season with tons of Halloween-themed candies and costumes for a month all ready. But there are many other healthier options than just candy for the Fall, whether you want family meals or fancy parties.

Fresh apples from the fall harvest are arriving in our stores. Crisp and juicy, these apples have not been in storage for the last several months. If you're not usually impressed by fresh apples, try a different variety than your usual. You could be surprised by the flavor, texture and aroma of something other than a Red Delicious. Try a Gala, a Rome, Jona-Red or any other new one.

How about some winter squash? Sure, there are the jack-o-lantern look-alikes, the little pie pumpkins. These are deep orange, sweet and thick inside. Steam, bake or microwave the halves, scoop out the pulp and mash it. Then use it in your favorite pumpkin pie, bread or muffin recipe. The extra flavor and brighter color will be noticeable. Besides, this is healthy way to sneak some good fiber and vitamin A into the kids who don't like their veggies. Or fill the halves with bread stuffing and serve to be cut at the table.

But go beyond the orange pumpkins and try another squash or two. How about a spaghetti squash? Cut one in half and scoop out the seeds. Bake, steam or

microwave until it's tender enough to poke a fork into. Then scrape the 'spaghetti' out with a fork. Serve it with any sauce you'd use for pasta. It has one quarter the amount of carbohydrates of an equal amount of regular spaghetti, but more fiber and minerals.

Or try a big bluish Hubbard squash, a flat white patty pan, a colorful Turk's turban or a long curved butternut. Each can be baked, boiled, steamed or microwaved. Each has their own unique flavor, plenty of fiber and nutrients. To bake, they do not need to be peeled first, which makes them easier to prepare. Or cut in slices then pare off the skin and cut in cubes to boil or steam. You can top them with tomato or creamy white sauce or layer them with cheese. They make a great substitute for potatoes in a stew or soup. Mix with ground beef and tomato sauce for a healthy casserole. Or use small ones, half a squash per person, and fill the cavity where the seeds were with sausage, cheese or bread stuffing. Because they are so mild and sweet, garlic and onion are good complements to bring out the best flavor.

Another underused fall veggie is a rutabaga. You've seen them, they look like huge waxy white and purple radishes. The wax is added to keep them fresh, and they do not taste at all like a radish. Rutabagas are mildly sweet. You'll need to cut off the outer skin, then slice or dice them. They can be boiled and mashed like potatoes, and are extra good if some garlic and cheese is added. They can be diced and baked or boiled in soups, stews or casseroles.

Parsnips are for the people who like sweet vegetables. These look like white carrots, but are distinctly sweeter. Many people like them boiled and mashed with potatoes, but Grandmother was more likely to add them to the roasting pan with a Sunday pot roast. Add some quartered onions and a few chopped carrots and you're

ready to go. For less heat in the kitchen, put the pot roast and veggies in the slow cooker in the morning, they will be ready for dinner when you walk in the door at night.

Here's another way to cook a winter squash that's quick and easy. It has a nice combination of flavors, mild garlic with a touch of sweet. It would be great with pork.

Garlic-y Winter Squash

1 medium butternut or other winter squash, about 2 to 2 ½ pounds

1 clove garlic

4 Tbsp trans-free margarine or butter

1 tsp sugar

1/3 cup fat free evaporated milk

Cut squash in slices or chunks and peel. Grate on large side of grater or in food processor. Peel and mince garlic. Melt 3 Tbsp margarine in large heavy skillet. Sauté garlic until aromatic, but don't let it brown. Add squash, sprinkle on sugar and turn squash until coated. Cover, reduce heat and cook 5-7 minutes. It should be tender but not mushy. Remove cover, add last of margarine and milk, and increase heat to high. Heat together for 3-4 minutes. Season to taste with pepper or salt. Serves 4 - 6.

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