

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Eating Golden

It is said that the Magi took gold, frankincense and myrrh to Bethlehem as gifts. Frankincense and myrrh are definitely not foods, but what about gold? Is that gold leaf stuff that you can buy for decorating real gold? Or the gold glitter? Or the gold dragées on the Christmas tree cookies? Are they really for eating? Dare I taste the chocolate bonbons with gold on them? Or the flan with a sheet of gold on top that my friends brought to the party? Yes, yes, and yes, if you're careful!

A fine sheet of gold on a pan of pudding can make a plain dish really spectacular. I remember seeing huge pans of flan topped with gold being dished out and sold in a market in Pakistan years ago. The gold just glowed in the entrance to the shops!

Gold is so highly prized partly because it doesn't react with much. It doesn't rust or decay like iron, turn green or blue with age the way copper or even silver does. It always keeps its golden gleam. The ancients found that out thousands of years ago. Because it was so valuable to them, not many of them would try to eat it. It is a metal, and not chewable after all!

But, gold also does not react in our bodies. If you choose to eat it, it basically goes in one end and out the other. It won't break down, and it won't combine with the proteins or fats we're made of. It won't even get into our bloodstream. The sheets of edible gold sold today for food decorating are so thin they're not going to hurt your teeth or scrape your throat. So yes, you can eat food decorated with gold!

You might want to be careful with those gold dragées though. Those glittering little balls for decoration are not pure gold. But they are very hard sugar with a coating of gold coloring. It's not the gold that would hurt you there, but the hard sugar. If you bite down on one of them you can surely jolt your teeth. So either remove them from the cookies before you bite, or bite very carefully.

The other part of the 'careful' I mentioned at the beginning is that you have to be sure you are using edible gold leaf. That is pure gold, with no other ingredients. If you buy gold from an art or craft supply store you might get something less than pure. Edible gold should be either 22 or 24 carat

gold, with no other plastics, metals or other chemicals included. If you are looking for it, be sure that the package says 22 or 24 carat and *edible* gold.

For those of us whose regular lives do not include topping our puddings with gold leaf, we should still have some golden foods in our diets. Bright golden yellow fruits and vegetables are wonderful rich sources of a variety of nutrients. Of course vitamin A is the first one we think of. Pure vitamin A looks like golden yellow salt or sugar. Some foods have ready-made vitamin A, others have beta carotene that our bodies turn into A. Don't think you must munch on raw carrots to get your carotene. We actually can absorb and use more if the foods are cooked! It's not an excuse to eat a whole pumpkin pie, but yes, there are some nutrients hidden in that tasty sweetness.

Other golden choices include cantaloupes and all the golden melons. Peaches and mangos are on the list. Persimmons are a seasonal golden globe for the fruit plate too. Carrots and of course pumpkins and winter squash of whatever variety you prefer are great choices. Golden cauliflower is a new addition to the possibility list.

If you happen to have part of a can of pumpkin left over from making the holiday pies, here's a breakfast choice to keep the family happy and healthy. If you open a can just for this, put the leftovers in a zipper seal bag and freeze it for the next time.

#### Pumpkin Pancakes

2 cups low-fat vanilla yogurt	½ cup raisins (or dried cranberries)
1 cup all-purpose flour	1 Tbsp sugar
2 tsp baking powder	½ tsp cinnamon
1 cup low fat milk	2 Tbsp margarine, melted
1 large egg	½ cup canned pumpkin

Stir 1 ½ cups yogurt and raisins together. Cover and refrigerate. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder and cinnamon in large bowl. Combine milk, butter, rest of yogurt, egg and pumpkin in second bowl. Mix well. Add liquid mixture to flour and stir just until combined. Don't overmix, it can still be a little lumpy. Spray a griddle or skillet with cooking spray and heat to medium. For each pancake pour ¼ cup of batter onto hot griddle. Cook 1 to 2 minutes until bubbles around the edges stay open. Flip pancakes and cook just until golden brown. Serve with yogurt raisin topping. Makes 15 pancakes.

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