Squash Your Bug

Your grandmother was right: Good cooking is good for your health

February 1, 1996 By Richard Pierce

Warm is one of those words that fills my mouth and vibrates in my chest as I say it. It's a rich sensual word that evokes images of people and things that make me feel comfortable and safe. As a person living with HIV, this is a feeling I value but don't always experience. So I look for warmth wherever I can. I surround myself with supportive people and create a nurturing and stimulating environment at work and at home.

I also seek warmth in practical ways, especially in the winter. I bundle up on the outside and eat foods that kindle my internal fires. Nothing does this quite like a big bowl of hot soup made from fresh vegetables. Even before I take my first taste, the soup starts to work its magic. It's an aromatic vaporizer that expands my sinus passages, triggers my salivary glands and sends my stomach the message that something good is about to happen.

If we choose easily digested foods, we can assimilate nutrients that are vital to maintaining a strong and balanced immune system. Soups, especially pureed ones, aid digestion because they've already been partially broken down. But all foods, even soups, should be eaten slowly so the salivary enzymes can do their job.

The consistency of soup enhances digestion, but what we put in that soup, and in all the food we eat, will determine how well we assimilate nutrients. Fresh whole grains, vegetables and fruits contain fiber that keeps the villae -- the little scrubbers on the stomach wall -- active These foods also help maintain intestinal flora essential for gut integrity.

The active ingredients in whole foods actually help us ward off the colds and flus that can be so devastating in winter. Below, I give a recipe for a winter squash soup that is delectable and easy to prepare. Each ingredient makes a unique nutritional contribution.

There are many wonderful varieties of winter squash. I've used buttercup because it's especially sweet, but feel free to substitute other varieties. When you cut off the ends of the squash and scoop out the seeds, save both. They can be used to make a simple stock that enhances the soup's flavor.

Squash, pumpkins and other orange vegetables are rich in beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A. Carotenes are potent antioxidants that protect us against free radicals, toxic

molecules that weaken the immune system. A 1994 study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that beta-carotene stimulated lymphocytes in HIV positive people as well as HIV negative controls. Many in our community take supplements containing this antioxidant. Remember that “to supplement” means “to add to.” Your supplementation program will be much more effective if you are adding to a diet of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Garlic has been used in cooking and medicine for thousands of years. The wisdom of traditional folk healers is now being confirmed by scientific research. Garlic, whose active ingredient is allicin, is a natural antibiotic that fights infections, including those caused by fungi and bacteria. It is effective in preventing and treating colds, flu and other respiratory ailments. Garlic that is cooked for a long time adds flavor to a dish, but loses many of its medicinal properties. To maintain those properties, mince the garlic and add it just before you turn the heat off.

Onions, which are in the garlic family, possess many of the same healing properties. Like squash, they contain vitamins A, B and C, which are potent antioxidants.

Food heals the body and the spirit. As you make your squash soup at home, think of how each ingredient is working to build your immune system and protect you against winter colds and flu. Then sit down to eat it -- perhaps with someone special to you -- and enjoy!

Squash Soup

INGREDIENTS:

1 buttercup squash, 2-2 l/2 pounds whole
1 yellow onion, sliced
2 l/2 cups water
1 tablespoon soy sauce or tamari (an aged wheat-free soy sauce)
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/4-1/2 teaspoon ground clove (to taste)
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2-1 tablespoon fresh grated ginger (to taste)
1/2 tablespoon tamari
1 teaspoon sea salt
fresh ground black pepper (optional)
2 sprigs fresh parsley or cilantro

METHOD:

1. Cut squash in half, trim ends, peel and seed.

2. Place sliced onion in the bottom of a 2-quart sauce pan. Add squash, tamari/soy sauce, cumin, cloves and water. Cover.

3. Bring to a boil over high heat. Lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add garlic and ginger. Cook 5 minutes more.

4. Add l/2 tablespoon tamari and 1 teaspoon sea salt.

5. Puree in a food processor or blender.

6. When ready to serve, garnish with parsley and freshly ground pepper.

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Squash-Your-Bug-12780-5059