

Dinner in a Pumpkin



This is our spooky Halloween night dinner!

I do the first baking of the pumpkin and make the meat/rice mixture a day or two ahead, then I do the second baking on Halloween afternoon. I make extra rice and heat extra button mushrooms to use on the side for my pickier Trick-or-Treaters.

It's a good, hearty meal to fill little bellies before they head out into 'hood for candy and fun!

Ingredients:

1 small to medium pumpkin (size of a regular soccer ball)
1 to 2 Ts canola or olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
1 cup finely chopped button mushrooms (may include stems)
1 ½ to 2 lbs lean ground beef (I use ground turkey)
salt
black pepper
2 T low-sodium soy sauce
2 T light or dark brown sugar
1 10 ¾ oz can low-fat cream of mushroom soup
1 8 oz can water chestnut slices, drained and diced
1 ½ cup cooked wild rice

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Have ready sturdy rimmed baking sheet.
2. Cut off top of pumpkin (like you're carving a jack-o'-lantern), to be used later as a lid, and set aside. Discard pulp and pumpkin seeds. Clean and hollow pumpkin. Place on baking sheet and bake for about 40 min.
3. Meanwhile, heat oil in large skillet. Add onion, cook for a while, then add mushrooms. Add meat and season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook for several minutes, breaking up clumps until no pink remains.
4. Add soy sauce, brown sugar, and soup. Cook for about 10 minutes. Then add water chestnuts and cooked rice.
5. Transfer the mixture to the pumpkin. Cover the top with aluminum foil and bake for 30 minutes, until the inside has heated through and the pumpkin flesh is tender when pierced with a fork.
6. Put on a serving platter and decorate the outside of the pumpkin with a jack-o'-lantern face. Serve warm.

Originally found in *The Washington Post*,
Recipe by Evelyn Small, F-5, October 24, 2007