



FOOD NEWS

December 2017

Township of Ocean School District



RECIPE LOVE

Squash Casserole

Source: Genius Kitchen,

When Jack Frost is nipping at your nose, there is no better remedy than comfort food. This heart-warming casserole is full of vegetables and goodness, giving you a solid dose of vitamins to keep the winter blues away!

- 1 medium bell pepper, diced
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup neutral oil (canola or grapeseed)
 - 1 medium onion, diced
 - 2 medium zucchini, sliced or diced
 - 4 small yellow squash, sliced or diced
 - 1 (16oz) can crushed tomatoes
 - 4 slices whole wheat bread, toasted and cubed
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each of pepper, garlic powder, and oregano
 - Parmesan cheese for topping
1. Sauté onions and bell pepper in oil for 5 minutes or until soft. Add squash that has been sliced/cubed.
 2. Sauté 5 minutes more, then add tomatoes (break up any large chunks).
 3. Add bread cubes & seasoning. Put in 2 quart casserole dish & sprinkle top with parmesan cheese.
 4. Bake at 350F for 30-40 minutes.

Nutrition — 149 calories, 8.5g fat, 572 mg sodium, 16g carbs, 3g fiber

RD CORNER

Hi! My name is Meredith Hesselein and I'm your registered dietitian. My main goals are to teach students lifelong habits of good health and wellness through food and to keep you in the loop on food and nutrition news. If you have any questions or requests, please don't hesitate to reach out!

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BENEFITS OF FIBER

Once cold weather hits, we tend to crave heavy, filling food items. But we have to remind ourselves to choose whole grain options and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables for the fiber! Foods vary in the type of fiber (soluble or insoluble), so eating a variety of foods will have the greatest benefits including helping control blood sugar, lowering cholesterol levels, normalizing bowel movements, maintaining bowel health, and weight maintenance. Aim for 25-30 grams per day from food.

IN THE KNOW

Winter holidays bring cheer and abundant festive eating. While common food allergens lurk in many traditional Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa dishes, a little preparation and planning can help you — whether you're a parent of a child with food allergies or hosting guests with food allergies — glide through the holidays safely.

5 Tips for Avoiding Food Allergens at Home

Host at Your Home

Because you are in control of what is served, this is the safest option. You can prepare only "safe" foods and let guests know what they can and cannot bring into the house. If you do serve foods containing allergens, designate separate areas where the allergen is allowed to help prevent cross-contamination.

Focus on Whole, Unprocessed Foods

Jennifer Bruning, MS, RDN, LDN, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics points out that while cooking from scratch may seem like more work, it helps ensure food and prep areas are free from food allergens. "You might even find that you save time in the long run because you don't have to scour every ingredient list. There's only one ingredient in an apple, for instance. Scratch cooking may mean more chopping, peeling or blending of whole foods, but it's worth it in the end."

Modify Traditional Recipes Using Allergen-Free Ingredients

"Once you have a few simple swaps under your belt, you'll realize just how easy it is to modify your recipes," Bruning said. "Focus on 'like items' when considering swaps: non-dairy milks for cow's milk (or vice-versa), or naturally gluten-free grains for wheat. Eggs in recipes often can be substituted with ground, rehydrated flax or chia seeds."

Always Read All Ingredient Labels

Even if you think a product is allergen-free, read the label. Food manufacturers change formulas, which may introduce allergens into previously "safe" products.

Keep it Clean

Prevent cross-contamination by encouraging frequent hand washing.

3 Tips for Avoiding Food Allergens Away from Home

Offer to Help the Host

If you help plan the menu or shop for ingredients, you can choose items you know are safe. If you cook, you can help ensure that dishes are prepared without allergens. And, don't hesitate to ask your host to keep labels from products to provide you peace of mind.

Bring Snacks and Desserts

If helping ahead of time is out of the question, bring a few allergen-free options. Bring allergen-free snacks and desserts, since baked goods tend to be the biggest culprit in food allergy reactions. For easy festive desserts, melt chocolate chips as a dip for dried apricots or allergen-free cookies, or bake apples sprinkled with cinnamon and brown sugar and topped with allergen-free whipped topping.

Communication is Key

"Be clear: if a host is unfamiliar with how to handle food allergies, they might fall victim to the 'a little bit won't hurt' mindset," Bruning said. "Tell them at the start that a little bit can hurt, and that you'd be more than happy to help with shopping or prep so that the host can feel comfortable and you can feel confident in the foods served. It's likely you're used to bringing allergy-friendly snacks along, and the holidays are no exception."

*Adapted from eatright.org
8 Tips for Allergy-Free Holidays
Written by Rima Kleiner, MS, RD, LDN
Published November 21, 2017*

FOOD DAYS

December 4 – National Cookie Day

December 5 – National Comfort Food Day

December 8 – National Brownie Day

December 17 – National Maple Syrup Day

December 30 – National Bacon Day