Spaghetti Squash

Spaghetti squash is a natural substitute for pasta. If you are not familiar with spaghetti squash, it will undoubtedly surprise you. On the outside, it looks much like any other winter squash. But when you cook it and open it up, you find that the flesh is long, spaghetti-sized strands. The spaghetti squash looks like a little golden watermelon and generally weighs between 3 and 4 pounds. It came to this country from China. You can store spaghetti squash in a cool dry place for up to three months (Nutrition Links, 2014).

You can serve spaghetti squash in many ways. Serve it as a side; add it to soup, frittata, and shrimp scampi; or substitute it in any pasta recipe. If you limit calories, serve your favorite sauce over spaghetti squash instead of pasta. One cup of spaghetti squash contains only 76 calories (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020).

Tips for Cooking Pasta

Pasta is a delicious and low-cost food to keep in your pantry. Pasta is a complex carbohydrate made from durum wheat. Eating pasta gives us a feeling of fullness because we digest it slowly (ChopChop Family, n.d.).

Cooking pasta is quick and easy. Choose the shape you like best. Bring water to a boil, add pasta, and stir during cooking to prevent sticking. Cook pasta for the amount of time on the package until it is firm, or “al dente,” which means “to the tooth” in Italian (Oldways, 2016). Drain pasta (don’t rinse) and mix with your favorite sauce. Two ounces of dry pasta will yield one cup of cooked pasta.

Veggie Noodles

4 servings | serving size: ¼ of recipe

Ingredients

» 1 pound pasta, uncooked
» 1 (15 ounce) can of vegetables, drained
» 1 cup spaghetti sauce
» ½ cup shredded cheese

Instructions

1. Boil water in a cooking pot. Add the pasta. Turn down the heat to medium-low; cook according to package. Pour pasta and water into a colander to drain.

2. Return cooked, drained pasta back to the cooking pot. Add vegetables and spaghetti sauce. Cook over medium-low heat just until the vegetables are hot.

3. Sprinkle with cheese just before serving.

Recipe adapted from https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/veggie-noodles

Nutrition Information: Calories 626, Fat 9g, Sodium 753mg, Carbohydrate 110g, Dietary Fiber 9g, Protein 25g

Tips:

» Fresh or frozen vegetables can be used. Just cook them before tossing them with pasta.
» Add more sauce if you prefer.
» Use whole grain pasta if available.

Credit: Linda Newton, Penn State

Scan this QR code for a video showing an easy way to cut and cook spaghetti squash.
Healthy Spaghetti Squash Pie

6 Servings | serving size: 1/6 of recipe

Wash whole, fresh produce under cold, running water by gently rubbing zucchini, and scrubbing spaghetti squash with a clean vegetable brush.

Ingredients

- Non-stick cooking spray
- 1 medium spaghetti squash
- 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 large eggs
- 1 large thinly sliced zucchini
- 2 cups tomato sauce
- 1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a microwave-safe baking dish, add 1 inch of water. Cut spaghetti squash in half, scoop out seeds. Using a fork, poke holes in both sides of the squash. Place face down in dish. Microwave squash for 10 minutes or until fork-tender.
3. Caution, squash may be hot. Using a fork, scoop the squash out of the skin into a large bowl. Add cottage cheese, Parmesan, and eggs. Rewash hands with soap and water. Mix well.
4. Lightly coat a round baking dish with cooking spray. Spread the squash mixture evenly in the baking dish. Layer zucchini slices on top. Spread sauce evenly and top with mozzarella. Bake 10-15 minutes or until bubbly and cheese is melted.
5. Let cool for 4-5 minutes. Cut into six slices and serve topped with basil.

Recipe adapted from https://onieproject.org/recipes/spaghetti-squash-pie

Nutrition Information: Calories 290, Fat 12g, Sodium 830mg, Carbohydrate 32g, Dietary Fiber 5g, Protein 17g

Tip: Use low-fat and low sodium products when available.

Easy White Sauce

2 servings | serving size: 1/2 of recipe

Ingredients

- 2 Tablespoons canola oil
- 2 Tablespoons flour
- 1 cup nonfat milk

Instructions

1. In a saucepan, warm the oil using low heat.
2. Add flour, stir until smooth.
3. Slowly add milk.
4. Heat to boiling and stir constantly until mixture is smooth and bubbly. Remove from heat.

Recipe adapted from Easy Meals from Household Staples by Penn State Extension Nutrition Links

Nutrition Information: Calories 50, Fat 3.5g, Sodium 15mg, Carbohydrate 3g, Dietary Fiber 0g, Protein 1g

Tips:

- Use this Easy White Sauce recipe with pasta.
- Use in recipes as a substitution for cream soups, for example, mushroom, chicken, celery, or potato.
- Suggested utensils are wooden spoons or whisk when stirring the sauce.

Credit: Mary Ehret, Penn State

References:


Learn more about cooking healthy on a budget! Contact Nutrition Links to see if you are eligible for free nutrition classes: scan this QR code, call 888-778-3535 or email nutritionlinks@psu.edu.