Spaghetti Squash

Article written by Brenda Aufdenkamp (baufdenkamp1@unl.edu) Extension Educator in Lincoln, Logan, McPherson Counties.

Spaghetti squash is a winter squash that is golden yellow, shaped like a small watermelon and ranges in size from 2 to 5 pounds. It is also called vegetable spaghetti. When cooked, the flesh separates in strands that resemble spaghetti pasta with a mild flavor.

Nutritional Value: One cup of cooked spaghetti squash provides about 42 calories, 10 grams of carbohydrates, and other nutrients such as vitamin A and potassium. Vitamin A is important for wound healing and helping maintain normal immune function. Potassium helps your nerves to function and muscles to contract.

Super Spaghetti Squash Bites
- 1 small spaghetti squash
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs
- ½ cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 egg

1. Wash hands with soap and water. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Cut spaghetti squash in half and scoop out seeds. Bake in oven for 40 minutes or until tender. (Or place cut side down on a microwave safe dish with ½ cup of water. Cover with a lid or plastic wrap and cook on high for 8-12 minutes.) The squash is done when a fork easily pierces the skin and goes into the flesh. Let cool and scoop out pulp.
3. Break egg into a medium-sized bowl. Wash hands with soap and water after cracking raw egg. Add 1 ½ cups of the cooked squash, bread crumbs and cheese to egg. Stir until thoroughly blended.
4. Line baking dish with parchment paper. Scoop 1 Tbsp squash batter to form bite-size balls. Place squash balls on prepared dish. Wash hands with soap and water. Place squash balls on prepared dish. Bake 16-20 minutes until bottoms are golden brown. Flip and bake another 3 minutes until golden.

Makes 5 servings (4 bites each). Each serving contains 103 calories, 3 g fat, 11 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber & 253 mg sodium.

Sources:
1. Fall Cooking, Nebraska Extension: http://go.unl.edu/ikcz
2. SNAP-ED Connection: https://snaped.fns.usda.gov

Selecting a squash:
- Summer squash is harvested and eaten while the skin is still tender. Winer squash grows a thick skin, which helps it to stay fresh longer.
- Select winter squash that are heavy for their size. Avoid winter squash that have moist, black, or shriveled stems.
- Winter squash has a long shelf life and if kept in a dry place between 55 and 60°F, will store for up to 3 months.
- Kids are more likely to eat a new food if they can explore with their fingers. Making squash bites is a great new finger food!