

Peeling back the truth on apples

By **BARBARA QUINN-INTERMILL**
 Monterey Herald

Reader RS from Indiana writes:

“Hi Barb, Being a retired home economics teacher, I always enjoy reading your column. I have always peeled the skin off of apples due to my concern about the chemicals used to spray the apples. Should I be concerned about this or am I overly cautious?”

You might be overly cautious and miss out on some great health benefits. As I mentioned in a previous column, most of the healthful ingredients in fresh apples including dietary fiber and antioxidant compounds reside in or close to the skin of an apple.

According to experts who recently attended the

Facts, Not Fear farm tour in the apple producing region of the Pacific Northwest, all apples — those grown both organically and conventionally — are safe to eat with the peels. That’s because improved farming methods over the past decades have greatly reduced the use of many pesticides.

According to the pesticide calculator at Alliance for Food and Farming (safe-fruitsandveggies.com), a woman could eat 850 apples in one day with no effect of pesticide residue on her health, even if the apple had the highest pesticide residue ever recorded on apples by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Again, just make sure you wash your hands with soap and water and your apples with plain water before crunching into this

good-for-you food.

On another topic: I tend to go bonkers for anything pumpkin this time of year. So I was intrigued to receive a sample of a plant-based, vegan and pumpkin version of marshmallows. This product is also non-GMO, certified kosher, has no artificial flavors or colors, no corn syrup, no gelatin and no gluten, and it’s free of the common allergens wheat, dairy, eggs, corn, peanut, and tree nuts.

Which made me wonder — what IS in vegan marshmallows? I took a look at the label: tapioca syrup, cane sugar, filtered water, tapioca starch, carrageenan (a seaweed extract), soy protein, natural flavors and annatto (a food coloring from the seeds of the achiote tree).

Typical marshmallows are made with four basic ingredients, say food scientists — sugar, corn syrup and gelatin plus some air. Some makers add natural and artificial flavors and color plus tetrasodium pyrophosphate (TSPP), a food additive used in other products such as meat substitutes and toothpaste.

It’s the gelatin that makes most marshmallows not vegan, i.e. free of animal products.

Gelatin is made with the protein collagen, an animal byproduct.

Interestingly, there’s not much difference nutritionally between vegan and regular varieties of marshmallows. They both are primarily sugar (about 6 teaspoons) and contain 100 calories per serving of 18 miniature marshmallows.



Marcin Zdrowiecki/Dreamstime-TNS

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What do I think? Marshmallows are not really a health food, but strict vegans who love marshmallows may enjoy this special variety. (They do cost twice as much as regular marshmallows.) I think my grandkids would love either type in their hot chocolate.

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PUMPKINS

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Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook until tender, about 15 minutes.

3. Cut top of pumpkin to create a lid, as you would with jack-o'-lanterns. Clean out seeds with a spoon, scraping the insides down to the pulp. Set aside.

4. While potatoes are cooking, brown meat in large pan over medium heat, breaking meat up with a spoon, until meat is cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat and drain, reserving 2 tablespoons fat.

5. Add reserved fat back to pan, and heat on medium. Add onion, mushroom (if using) and 1/4 teaspoon salt, and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in flour and tomato paste and cook, stirring, until flour is incorporated, about 1 minute.

6. Whisk in broth, thyme and Worcestershire sauce into onion mixture, scraping pan as you go, and bring to a simmer. Return meat to pan and cook over medium-low heat until sauce is thickened, about 6 to 8 minutes. Test for flavor and add salt and pepper to taste. Add peas and carrots into mixture, if using.

7. Drain potatoes, return to hot pot and mash until smooth. Stir in butter, then half-and-half. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

8. Rub the inside of the pumpkins with salt. Fill pumpkins 2/3 full with meat mixture. Fill pumpkins to bottom of opening with mashed potatoes. Replace tops of pumpkins. Place pumpkins on prepared baking sheet.

9. Bake in oven for approximately 90 minutes or until pumpkin “gives” when you squeeze the sides. It may take longer than 90 minutes depending on the size of the pumpkin.

10. If you would like to brown the mashed potatoes, broil them for 3 to 5 minutes with the pumpkin lid removed.

Per serving: 366 calories; 20 g fat; 8 g saturated fat; 68 mg cholesterol; 19 g protein; 22 g carbohydrate; 26 g sugar; 3 g fiber; 522 mg sodium; 62 mg calcium — Recipe from prettyprudent.com

STUFFED PUMPKIN DINNER

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 large pie pumpkin (5 1/2 to 6 pounds)
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef
- 3/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 small green pepper, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups cooked rice
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fully



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Pumpkin Stuffed with Everything Good.

- cooked ham or sausage
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cider vinegar

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Wash pumpkin and cut out a 6-inch lid, as you would with a jack-o'-lantern. Discard seeds and loose fibers from inside. Place pumpkin in a large Dutch oven. Fill Dutch oven with boiling water to a depth of 6 inches; add 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes or until the pumpkin is almost tender but holds its shape. Carefully

remove and drain well; pat dry.

2. In a large skillet, cook the beef, onion and green pepper over medium heat until meat is no longer pink and vegetables are tender; drain well. Cool slightly; place in a large bowl. Add rice, tomato sauce, ham, eggs, garlic, oregano, pepper, vinegar and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Stir to combine thoroughly.

3. Place pumpkin in a shallow, sturdy baking pan. Firmly pack beef mixture into pumpkin; replace top. Bake for 1 hour. Let stand for 10 minutes. Remove the top; if desired, use paper towel to remove excess moisture

from top of meat. Slice pumpkin into wedges.

Per serving: 281 calories; 5 g fat; 2 g saturated fat; 105 mg cholesterol; 27 g protein; 34 g carbohydrate; 11 g sugar; 3 g fiber; 377 mg sodium; 92 mg calcium — Recipe from Taste of Home

STUFFED BABY PUMPKINS

Yield: 6 servings

- 6 mini pumpkins, preferably the white variety
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, plus more for the shells
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper, plus more for the shells
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 scallions (about 1/3 cup), chopped
- 1 large garlic clove, finely chopped
- 4 cups baby kale or stemmed and roughly chopped lacinato (Tuscan) kale (about 4 ounces)
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 cup white breadcrumbs, lightly toasted
- 2/3 cup shredded Gruyère cheese
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/4 cup heavy cream

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Wash the pumpkins. With a small, sharp knife, remove the tops as

if for a jack-o'-lantern. Scoop out the seeds and stringy insides with a spoon, leaving the flesh intact. Rinse, then rub with a pinch of salt and a few grinds of pepper.

2. Melt the butter in a sauté pan over medium heat, add the scallions and cook for a few minutes. Add the garlic and sauté another minute or so, until fragrant. Add the kale and cook until it just wilts, about 3 or 4 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in the lemon juice and transfer to a bowl.

3. Add the breadcrumbs, cheese, pine nuts, nutmeg, red pepper flakes, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon black pepper. Mix well, then stir in cream.

4. Divide the filling into the pumpkins and replace the tops. Line a baking dish with parchment paper (or brush with 1 tablespoon olive oil) and arrange the filled pumpkins in the dish.

5. Bake for 1 hour, watching to make sure the tops don't brown too much. Test the pumpkins by piercing with a fork. If the skin doesn't pierce easily, remove the tops and bake an additional 15 to 20 minutes. Replace the tops and serve hot.

Per serving: 313 calories; 23 g fat; 8 g saturated fat; 32 mg cholesterol; 10 g protein; 22 g carbohydrate; 5 g sugar; 4 g fiber; 290 mg sodium; 221 mg calcium — Slightly adapted from a recipe by Kim Sverson in the New York Times

SKILLETS

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SKILLET SWEET POTATO HASH

This easy breakfast dish is a favorite of Lawrenceville resident Mike Sanders, who has been collecting vintage Griswold cast-iron pans for decades. It’s super easy and super nutritious, and comes together in minutes.

If a cast-iron pan is properly seasoned (with a dark, semi-glossy finish and no rust or rough spots) neither the potatoes nor the eggs will stick. He adds a simple garnish of Sriracha sauce to spice things up, and parsley to make it pretty.

This recipe uses three pans, but as Sanders points out, clean up is pretty easy in a cast-iron pan — simply wipe interior surface of the still-warm skillet with paper towels to remove any excess food and oil, then rinse under hot water with a sponge or nonabrasive scrubber.

- Olive oil, for pan
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and shredded (about 2 cups)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Butter for pan
- 2 eggs
- 2 thick slices smoked ham
- Chopped parsley, for garnish

Heat a medium cast-iron pan over medium heat and add 1 tablespoon or two of olive oil,



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS
Sweet Italian sausage sizzles in the same pan as sliced apple and red cabbage in this easy skillet recipe.

swirling to coat the pan. Once sizzling, add shredded sweet potato in a single layer, season generously with salt and pepper and cook, turning every so often with a spatula, until the potatoes are soft and nicely browned, and you can't make out the individual shreds. Cover, and keep warm while you prepare the eggs.

Heat another pan over medium heat, and then add 1 tablespoon or so of butter. Reduce heat

to low, then break 2 eggs into pan. Cover with a lid, and cook until egg white is set, around 3 minutes.

While eggs are cooking, heat a flat skillet over medium heat, then add 2 slices of ham. Pan fry until brown and crispy, about 2-3 minutes per side.

Spoon sweet potatoes onto a plate, then top with fried eggs. Place ham beside hash, and drizzle Sriracha sauce over top.

Garnish with chopped parsley, and serve immediately.

Serves 1.
 — Mike Sanders

PAN-SEARED SAUSAGE WITH APPLES

Fall is apple season, and a favorite pairing for the fruit is sweet Italian sausage. This skillet dish comes together quickly, and is full of wonderful autumn flavor. The choice of apple is key: You need to use a firm variety such as Pink Lady or Gala that will hold up to heat well. (Red and Gold Delicious will get mushy.) Serve with crusty Italian bread and a glass of chianti.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 tart apples, each cored and cut into 8 slices
- 1/2 red small red cabbage, shredded
- 4 sweet Italian sausages (about 1 1/2 pounds)
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons white wine or Champagne vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add apples, cut side down, turning occasionally, until apples are

golden brown, 5-8 minutes. Add cabbage and continue to cook until cabbage is wilted, about 4 to 5 minutes.

Prick sausages with a fork, then add to skillet. Cook, turning occasionally, until sausage is browned and cooked through, 10-12 minutes.

Add wine and vinegar to skillet. Bring to a boil, reduce heat,

and simmer until sauce is thick enough to coat a spoon, about 4 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Serve with pan juices spooned over, with some crusty bread for sopping up sauce.

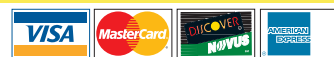
Serves 4.
 — Adapted from bonappetit.com



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