



Krys Hess, BS Nutrition Science, SNS, Nutrition & Wellness Chair

It's officially pumpkin spice season!! YAY!! If you're anything like me, you love this time of year.

However, it also comes with the realization that pumpkin spice **does not** contain pumpkin...WHAT?!?!? Most of us have realized that by this point in our lives but let's be honest, when you made the discovery when you are younger, as a pumpkin lover, it really is disappointing.

Why? Because if you love pumpkin, the spice alone doesn't really cut it, does it? Although the pumpkin spice gives the pumpkin the spicy fall flavor that we love, it is not the flavor of pumpkin that some crave. Pumpkin, although scientifically a fruit because it contains seeds, is more nutritionally similar to a vegetable. Pumpkin has an impressive nutrient profile. It's packed with vitamins and minerals and low in calories. You'll find pumpkins packed with **beta-carotene, vitamin C, vitamin E, iron** and **folate**, which all assist in major boost to your immune system. Pumpkin is also high in **carotenoids**, which are compounds that can function as **antioxidants**. Antioxidants can help protect "bad" LDL cholesterol from oxidizing. Pumpkin also contains nutrients that can improve your heart health, including **potassium, vitamin C** and **fiber**. It's incredibly versatile and can easily be added to your diet in many ways. But have no fear, pumpkin spice can still be part of your fall flavors! It is also a good source of antioxidants. You'll find some hidden benefits in a few of the individual spices...**cinnamon** can help lower blood pressure and blood sugar; **allspice** may help with digestion, reduce inflammation and support the immune system; **ginger** is a natural digestive aid that may help with nausea and indigestion; **nutmeg** is a rich source of antioxidants and **cloves** contain manganese which is important in bone health and have natural antimicrobial properties. BUT...be mindful when making your pumpkin and/or pumpkin spice choices to choose wisely and watch for added fats and sugars that can take away from the many health benefits pumpkin and pumpkin spice have to offer us.

Happy Pumpkin Spice Season!!