



the CommonHealth Compass



Southwestern Stuffed Acorn Squash

From "Getting Your Kid On A Gluten-Free, Casein-Free Diet"

INGREDIENTS

- 3 acorn squash
- 4 ounces of bulk turkey sausage or 6 ounces of links and remove meat from casings
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ½ medium red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 Tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 can stewed tomatoes, chopped up
- 1 can black beans, rinsed
- ½ teaspoon salt
- several dashes hot red pepper sauce, to taste

PREPARATION

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat a large baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Cut squash in half horizontally. Scoop out and discard seeds. Place the squash cut-side down on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until tender, about 45 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, lightly coat a large skillet with cooking spray; heat over medium heat. Add turkey sausage and cook, stirring and breaking up with a wooden spoon, until lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Add onion and bell pepper; cook, stirring often, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, chili powder and cumin; cook for 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes, beans, salt and hot sauce, scraping up any browned bits. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes.
4. When the squash are tender, reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees fill the squash halves with the turkey mixture. Place on the baking sheet and bake until the filling is heated through, 8-10 minutes.

A Mother's Quest for Answers

When my oldest daughter was developing as an infant, I had a sense that she was not a "typical" child. She was very shy, and would hide under tables around new people, would spin wheels compulsively on toy trucks, wasn't interested in dolls, and didn't really play with toys meaningfully. She was very quiet, and she seldom smiled or laughed. I went on the quest that every parent goes on when they suspect their child is different.

We started seeing Dr. Mary Megson, a pediatric developmental specialist in Richmond, when Jenny was five years old. Dr. Megson diagnosed her as "autistic" and suggested that we try Jenny on a diet free of wheat and milk products (a gluten and casein-free diet) as part of her therapy.

While I am a Registered Dietitian and had been for 11 years at that time, I was freaked out and intimidated, but we did it anyway. There was not a lot of information on the diet nine years ago and I thought, "Geez, if I am having a hard time with this how do moms that don't have a degree in human nutrition feel?"

At that moment, I realized that the Universe had just plopped my life's purpose in my lap. I accepted the challenge and started writing a book on how parents could get their child on a gluten-free, casein-free diet.

I saw the effects of the new diet quickly. After about three weeks on the diet, Jenny started to improve socially, her speech improved, she started drawing people in detail, she stopped spinning things, she stopped lining things up, and generally dropped all of her autistic symptoms.

Today, she is not classified as autistic, although she is "cognitively impaired" and in a special education program in school. My book for parents "Getting Your Kid on a Gluten-Free, Casein-Free Diet" offers alternatives to wheat flour, such as rice flour, tapioca starch, potato starch flour, and soy, rice, tofu and almond milk products for cow's milk products, and includes over 70 recipes. It was published in February of this year, nine years after I started writing it. The Universe has its own timing.

Editor's note: Susan's book is available on Amazon.com and at Barnes and Noble Bookstores.



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