

ACORN SQUASH STUFFED WITH APRICOTS AND CORNBREAD

4 cups cornbread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional for brushing squash
2 large Spanish onions, thinly sliced
1/2 cup finely diced celery with leaves
2 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh sage
2 tsp. finely chopped garlic
1 1/2 cups hot water or vegetable broth
1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
1/2 cup chopped pecans, lightly toasted (optional)
2 Tbsp. finely chopped parsley
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
3 large acorn squash, halved and seeded
Boiling water

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. On baking sheet, spread cornbread cubes and toast until lightly browned, 15-20 minutes. Transfer to bowl and set aside.

In heavy 2-quart pot, heat oil over high heat. Add onions, celery, sage and garlic and sauté 20 minutes. Add water or broth, apricots and pecans, if desired. Simmer until two-thirds of liquid is absorbed, about 10 minutes.

Fold vegetables, parsley and salt and pepper, to taste, into cornbread. (Filling can be refrigerated for up to 1 day.) When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees. In baking pans large enough to hold them in single layer, place squash halves cut-side down. Brush skin lightly with oil. Pour 1/2-inch boiling water into pans and bake 20 minutes, until squash are halfway cooked. (Or, in microwave-safe dish, microwave 10-15 minutes, until halfway cooked.)

Transfer squash to plate until cool enough to handle. (This can be done 8 hours ahead.) Fill squash with stuffing and return, stuffing side up, to pan. (This can be done 4 hours ahead.) Bake about 1 hour, until squash pierce easily with tip of knife. Before serving, cut each squash half in half again.

Makes 12 servings.

Per serving: 212 calories, 8 g total fat (2 g saturated fat), 33 g carbohydrates, 3 g protein, 4 g dietary fiber, 312 mg sodium.



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American Institute for Cancer Research, 1759 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009 **Tel:** (800) 843-8114 | (202) 328-7744 in D.C. **Fax:** (202) 328-7226 **Email:** aicrweb@aicr.org