



# 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 in Barnes and Noble Bookstores.*



Susan Lord,  
CommonHealth  
regional coordinator

# Learn How To ‘Block Those Rays’

Who hasn't spent hours in the yard, on the golf course or the slopes without giving a thought to what the sun might be doing to your skin until it's too late and you have a bad sunburn. **DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN** ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

**Sun!** We tend to think about sun protection only when we spend a day at the lake, beach, or pool. However, sun exposure adds up day after day, and it happens every time you are in the sun.



CommonHealth's Block Those Rays program explains how you can prevent sun damage that may lead to wrinkles, premature aging, cataracts, and skin cancer. Participants receive a sturdy kit with sun block and lip balm. Look for a program at your agency between April 1 and June 30, 2009 and block those rays to stay safe in the sun.

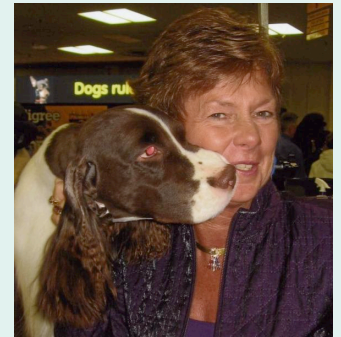
## CommonHealth, Employee Support Made Weight Loss Possible

“As a 17-year employee of VDOT, I have taken advantage of CommonHealth programs consistently over the years. I joined the WeightWatchers program last January and as of last October had lost 30 pounds. Many of the CommonHealth programs helped contribute to my weight loss goal. The pedometer as well as the ‘Enjoy Eating’ programs were instrumental in my weight loss. The Lt. Governor’s physical activity and nutrition challenges were welcome programs and most helpful this past fall.

“I power walk twice a day at work during breaks and at least once daily on weekends. My physician was very pleased to be able to cut my blood pressure medication in half and was most complimentary of my health and lifestyle changes. I feel much better, have more energy and stamina and am able to devote more time to my first love, raising and showing English Springer Spaniels, including this year’s Westminster Dog Show in New York City.

“All of these changes would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of CommonHealth programs and most of all the support of the Commonwealth’s employees.

“Thank you to everyone who has or had a part in offering CommonHealth programs to State employees. A healthy employee is a happy employee who, ultimately, costs the state less in health benefits.



**Janice M. Spence**

## Tips to Combat Stress

Why are some people better able to cope with stressors than others? Research points to a characteristic of these individuals they call hardiness or stress resilience. You can adopt some of these principles to increase your ability to withstand stressors without harmful effects on your health.

- 1. Friends are the ultimate de-stressor.** Increase your social or spiritual network, and make time to connect with friends in enjoyable activities.
- 2. Retrain your mind to relax when facing a stressful situation.** Close your eyes, breathe deeply, tell yourself you will be able to handle this and that this too shall pass.
- 3. Have something to do every day that gives you pleasure or makes you happy.** Think about this occasion when the going gets tough.
- 4. Get a pet or a plant, or both!** The presence of pets and plants in your life lowers your stress levels.
- 5. Be grateful.** Focus on what is going right in your life.

