

# Baked Opo Squash with Ground Beef

## Cousa bi Lahm Mafroom bil Furin

This smooth skinned squash is packed with flavor. Opo squash is a member of the cucumber family and can be found year round in most markets. (California is a major producer of Opo squash.) It is a good source of vitamin A and C, and is a good source of fiber. So easy to prepare, it will quickly become a favorite around your house, I know it is at mine.

**Prepare ahead:** The Opo squash can be prepared up to 2 days in advance. Cover and refrigerate until needed. Heat and serve as directed.

### For the Opo Squash

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1/2 pound ground beef (you can substitute ground chicken or lamb)  
1 1/2 cups diced onion (1/4 inch)  
3/4 teaspoons salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 teaspoon allspice  
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 tablespoon tomato paste  
1-15 ounce can tomato sauce-divided  
1 room temperature Opo squash (about 1 pound)  
1/2 cup water (more if necessary)  
1 1/2 cups frozen green peas-thawed  
1 tablespoon and 1 tablespoon toasted pine nuts-divided  
1 tablespoon chopped parsley

### To prepare the Opo Squash

Preheat the oil in a large skillet over medium high. Add the meat, and saute while breaking it into small pieces. Once browned, add the onions, salt and spices. Reduce the heat to medium/medium low. Cook and stir until the onions are translucent and tender. If it begins to stick...reduce heat further.

Once the onions are tender and the moisture has been absorbed, reduce the heat to low. Add the tomato paste and 1/4 cup of tomato sauce and 1 tablespoon pine nuts. Mix well. Remove off the heat and set aside uncovered.

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Peel the squash, then remove the tip and the tail. Cut the squash in half lengthwise. Using a grapefruit spoon, or a zucchini corer, remove the soft-seeded center from tip to tail from the center of the squash forming a channel. Divide the filling in half and fill each channel of the squash using all of the filling. Coat the base of a small rectangular casserole, (about a 1 and 1/2 quart size casserole), with olive oil. Pour the water and remaining tomato sauce into the casserole. Add the peas and mix well. Place the two halves of the filled squash in the casserole. Spoon a bit of the tomato sauce over each half of squash. Cover the top with

aluminum foil and seal around the edges. Place the casserole on the middle shelf of the oven. After 30 minutes remove from the oven and remove the foil. Insert a fork into the flesh to ensure it is tender. If not, return to the oven for several minutes. Once tender, carefully spoon the tomato sauce and peas generously over each stuffed squash. Return to the oven uncovered. After 10 minutes remove from the oven.

### **To serve**

Transfer the squash and serve over your favorite steamed rice recipe or steamed grain. Slice each half widthwise into 4 pieces. Spoon additional sauce over each. Sprinkle chopped parsley and 1 tablespoon toasted pine nuts over the squash. Any leftover sauce can be offered in a small bowl for those of us that love extra sauce!