

Bake Rigatoni with Sausage, Butternut Squash and Kale

2 medium butternut squash, peeled and cut into 2" chunks

Black pepper

1 tsp. fennel seeds

6 garlic cloves, chopped

2 cups half-and-half*

1½ cups finely grated Romano or mozzarella cheese

6-8 sprigs fresh thyme

½ tsp. salt, divided

1 lb. Italian sweet sausage, casing removed

1 bunch kale, roughly chopped

8 oz. uncooked rigatoni

½ cup chicken broth

½ cup breadcrumbs

Preheat oven to 400°. Lightly oil 9x13" baking dish. Toss together squash, olive oil, thyme, ½ tsp. salt and pepper on a large baking sheet. Roast 20-25 minutes, until squash is tender, but not mushy. Discard thyme. Place sausage and fennel seeds in a large Dutch oven; cook over medium-high heat, stirring frequently to break up sausage, until meat is no longer pink. Remove sausage and drain most of the oil. Return pan to stove; lower heat to medium. Add kale and garlic; sauté until kale is wilted, 3-5 minutes. Add ¼ tsp. salt and pepper. Turn off heat and return sausage to pan. Reduce oven temperature to 375°. Cook pasta 2 minutes less than package directions. Drain well. Toss with sausage mixture. Add half-and-half, chicken broth and half the cheese. Gently toss. Transfer to baking pan, top with breadcrumbs and remaining cheese. Bake 25 minutes, until thoroughly heated and crusty on top.

Submitted by Sara Thronsedt, WOTC Master Gardener

*To decrease fat content, may consider substituting evaporated skim milk for part/all of the ½ and ½.