

# Pumpkin is a healthy fruit!

By Jodi Schneider  
Correspondent

Pumpkins are the most talked-about squash in October! They appear in pumpkin patches, get served up in pies, and get carved into jack-o'-lanterns for Halloween. Pumpkins can do it all. Pumpkin-mania shows no signs of slowing with loads of new products having joined in with pumpkin flavor. There are pumpkin ice creams, baking mixes, pasta, pumpkin muffins and pumpkin beer. There is even a pumpkin-flavored dog food.

Pumpkins have been grown in North America for almost 5,000 years. Pumpkins are believed to have originated in North America. Seeds from related plants have been found in Mexico dating back to 7000 to 5500 B.C.

Native American Indians used pumpkin as a staple in their diets centuries before the pilgrims landed. They also dried strips of pumpkin and wove them into mats.

Big pumpkins are usually used for carving and small ones are used for pies. Then there are the true pumpkin giants. Every year farmers compete to see who can grow the biggest pumpkin – taking their monster squash to fairs in flatbed trucks. The world record for pumpkins is just over 2,200 pounds, about the same weight as a full-grown polar bear!

Some people think of pumpkins as little more than a Halloween decoration or a Thanksgiving pie filling. However, it may be time to rethink this plump, nutritious orange plant.

Dr. Inice Gough, DC, CCT of Three Sisters Chiropractic and First Line Nutritional Therapy noted that eating pumpkin has shown to have a positive effect in helping to lower blood pressure.

"It's also been shown to help in the prevention of Type 2 diabetes, but leave off any added sugar," Gough said. "In short, pumpkins are heart-healthy, blood-sugar healthy, and the nutrient-dense pumpkin seeds and the oils from the seeds have shown to have a positive effect on the prostate, lowering BPH. So, men, be sure to save those seeds this Halloween."

Pumpkins are a natural no-guilt food and packed with nutrients, especially beta-carotene and fiber. Half a cup of pumpkin provides 200 percent of the current recommendation for vitamin A, along with lutein and zeaxanthin, which are pigments that promote eye health. Pumpkins are rich in potassium, which

helps your muscles contract and nerves fire. Even pumpkin seeds are nutritious.

Preparing fresh pumpkin at home will deliver the most benefits for your health, but canned pumpkin is also a great choice.

There is a range of ways to eat more pumpkin. You can make pumpkin soup or hummus, turn pumpkin puree into a pasta sauce, a chili or even make lasagna! Some people sweeten pumpkin with honey and toss it in their yogurt, others roast pumpkin seeds in salt and pepper, chili powder or cinnamon. Pancakes and scones are always a delicious addition to the pumpkin recipe list when trying to incorporate pumpkin into every meal of the day.

Whether growing in a field, displayed in a store or getting diced up for a pie, there are many ways to enjoy pumpkins.

Most pumpkin enthusiasts have had pumpkin pie made from canned pumpkin. Ah, but a pumpkin pie made from a fresh pumpkin tastes so much better!

So, where can you find a fresh pumpkin for cooking?

There are two popular pumpkin patches in Central Oregon that folks love to visit every autumn and at Smith Rock Ranch and DD Ranch in Terrebonne, a trip in October has become a tradition for

many families.

Although the variety of pumpkins that usually ends up carved into a jack-o'-lantern is perfectly edible, the sweeter and smaller sweet or pie pumpkin varieties are the best to cook with.

## Homemade Pumpkin Pie (made from a fresh pumpkin)

*1 medium sugar pumpkin (about 3 pounds)*

*Easy Pie Crust:*

*2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for flouring*

*1/4 tsp salt*

*2/3 cup (11 Tbls) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces*

*Filling:*

*1 small pumpkin*

*2 large eggs*

*14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk*

*1 tsp cinnamon*

*1/2 tsp EACH of ginger, nutmeg, salt*

**For the pumpkin:** Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Remove the stem from the pumpkin and scrape out the insides, discarding the seeds. Cut the pumpkin in half and lay the pieces cut-side down on a rimmed baking sheet lined with aluminum foil. Bake until fork-tender, about 1 hour or more. Let cool.

**For the easy pie crust:** While the pumpkin is cooking, make the crust. In a large bowl, combine the flour and salt. Add in the butter and

work into the dough with a fork until the mixture is crumbly. Stir in just enough cold water (4 to 5 tablespoons) with a fork just until the flour is moistened. Divide the dough in half, shape each half into a ball and flatten slightly. Wrap one ball in plastic wrap and refrigerate for another use.

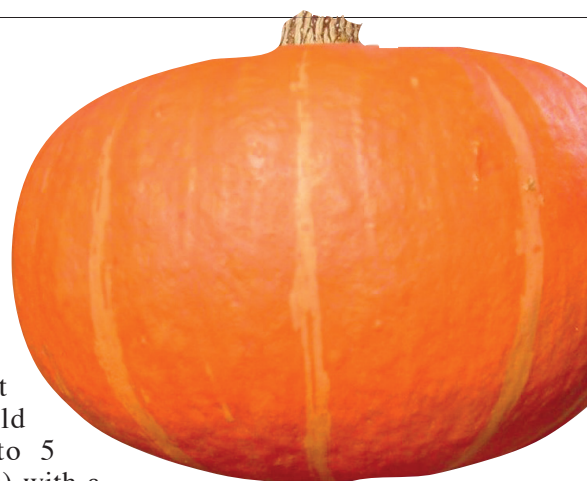
Roll out the remaining dough ball on a lightly floured surface to a 12-inch round. Transfer to a 9-inch-diameter glass pie dish. Fold the overhangs under and crimp decoratively. Pierce the dough all over with a fork. Chill in the refrigerator for 15 minutes.

Line the crust with foil, fill with dried beans or pie weights and bake until the sides are set, about 12

minutes. Remove the foil and beans. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees F.

**For the filling:** Scoop out the pulp from the roasted pumpkin and puree in a food processor or blender until smooth (you should have about 3 cups). Add the eggs, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, salt, condensed milk, and combine very thoroughly.

Pour the filling into the crust and bake until the filling is set in the center, about 1 hour. Transfer the pie to a rack and cool for 30 minutes. Serve at room temperature or chilled.



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