

food and recipes

# Pumpkin: The King of Squash

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Pumpkin Soup With Sage



Pumpkin Gratin With Sun-Dried Tomatoes

DATING BACK TO THE DAYS OF THE FIRST THANKSGIVING, PUTTING PUMPKIN INTO PIE IS A LONG-STANDING TRADITION. AS ALWAYS, THIS SEASONAL DESSERT WILL FIND A PLACE OF PROMINENCE ON THE MAJORITY OF HOLIDAY TABLES.

But however satisfying and traditional the use of pumpkin in pie may be, it isn't the only good thing to do with this autumnal vegetable.

Rich in flavor and meaty in texture, a pumpkin is technically just one of the many varieties of winter squash and can be prepared as such.

Most of us are familiar with the big, round pumpkins sold for jack-o'-lanterns. Whereas these are fun to carve, the meat is often fibrous and not very tasty. Toasted seeds are about the only edible part.

But smaller pumpkins, such as Winter Luxury, Small Sugar and Cheese varieties, yield a sweet and tender flesh that is absolutely delicious. The canned variety that most of America uses is from such a variety, the Dickinson.

Perfect for both sweet and savory dishes, pumpkin is a versatile ingredient. Simply roasted with butter and spices, pumpkin makes a hearty and nutritious side dish. Puree pumpkin with chicken stock for a velvety, low-fat soup. Just as it adds a special flavor to pie, pumpkin and its fall spices can be used in other baked goods such as breads and cheesecakes.

## PUMPKIN SOUP WITH SAGE

From *Saveur Cooks Authentic American* by The Editors of *Saveur* Magazine  
Serves 6

- 1 small pie pumpkin, about 5 lbs.
- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 medium yellow onions, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 4 to 6 cups chicken stock
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 18 fresh sage leaves
- 9 shallots, peeled and halved lengthwise

Preheat oven to 350° F. Quarter and seed pumpkin, rub flesh with olive oil and bake on baking sheet until tender, about 30 minutes. Set aside and allow to cool.

Melt 4 tbsp. butter in a heavy stockpot over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until onions are soft, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, scrape the flesh from pumpkin. Add to onions and garlic, and cook for another 5 minutes.

Add 4 cups stock to pot and simmer for 30 minutes. Puree soup in

a food processor until smooth, then return it to pot. If necessary, thin with additional stock. Season to taste with salt and pepper, then cover soup and keep warm over lowest heat.

Meanwhile, heat about 1 cup vegetable oil in a small pan over medium heat. When oil is hot, fry sage leaves until crisp. Drain leaves on paper towels. Discard oil or reserve for another use.

In the same pan, melt remaining 2 tbsp. butter over medium heat and cook shallots until soft and golden, about 15 minutes. To serve, ladle soup into individual bowls and garnish each serving with shallot halves and fried sage leaves.

## PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE

Adapted from *Stars Desserts* by Emily Luchetti  
Serves 8–10

### Crust:

- 2 cups finely ground gingersnaps, crushed to crumbs
- 2 tbsp. melted sweet butter

### Cheesecake:

- 1 lb.-13 oz. cream cheese
- 1 cup plus 2 tbsp. sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1-3/4 cups pumpkin puree (canned or fresh)
- 9 oz. mascarpone

Preheat the oven to 300° F.

### To make the crust:

Put the cookie crumbs in a small bowl, and stir in the melted butter. Press the mixture in the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan. Bake the crust for 10 minutes.

### To make the cheesecake:

Put the cream cheese in the bowl of an electric mixer. Using the paddle attachment, beat on medium speed for about 2 minutes, until smooth. Continuing to mix, slowly add the sugar and the salt.

Add the eggs one at a time, and mix well. Add the ginger, cinnamon and pumpkin puree. Decrease to low speed, and stir in the mascarpone. Spread the batter over the cooked crust.

Put the cheesecake in the oven. Put a pan of hot water on another rack below the cake. (The steam prevents a crust from forming on top of the



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Cranberry-Walnut Pumpkin Bread

cake.) Bake the cheesecake for 35 to 60 minutes, until almost set. (The center of the cake will not be completely firm.)

When the cake is done, loosen it from the edges of the pan by running a knife around the inside edge. Let the cake cool for 30 minutes at room temperature. Both these steps help prevent the top from cracking. Refrigerate the cheesecake in its pan until cold.

Unmold the cheesecake by running a knife around the inside edge of the pan.

To serve the cheesecake, cut it with a hot dry knife. (Dip the knife in hot water and then dry off.)

### PUMPKIN GRATIN WITH SUN-DRIED TOMATOES

From *The Dean & DeLuca Cookbook* by

David Rosengarten

Serves 6

- One 3 lb. pumpkin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 oz. smoked bacon, finely diced
- 1 large red onion, minced
- 1 cup finely minced sun-dried tomatoes (use oil-marinated type)
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tbsp. heavy cream
- 1/3 cup plus 2 tbsp. finely grated Gruyere cheese
- 1/4 cup coarse, fresh, white bread crumbs

Remove the flesh from inside of the pumpkin, discard the seeds and cut the flesh into thin slices, about 2 inches by 2 inches. Cook the pumpkin slices in a large kettle of boiling salted water until just tender, about 10 minutes. Drain the pumpkin in a colander, and transfer to a bowl. Season well with salt and pepper.

Preheat the oven to 375° F.

Cook the bacon in a large skillet over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until it begins to crisp. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain. Stir in the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, about 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat

and stir in half of the sun-dried tomatoes and the thyme; let cool slightly.

Stir the onion mixture, cooked bacon, eggs, cream and 2 tbsp. of the cheese into the pumpkin, and season with salt and pepper. Place the mixture in a 9-inch gratin dish, smoothing the top. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/3 cup cheese and bread crumbs; bake until nicely browned, about 30 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

Divide among six plates, and strew the remaining 1/2 cup of minced sun-dried tomatoes over the gratin portions.

### CRANBERRY-WALNUT PUMPKIN BREAD

Makes 2 loaves

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup applesauce
- 3 large eggs
- 1 16-ounce can solid pack pumpkin
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1-1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1-1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
- 1 cup dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter and flour two 9x5x3-inch loaf pans.

In a large bowl, whisk together the sugars, oil and applesauce. Mix in eggs and pumpkin. Sift flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda, salt and baking powder into another large bowl. Stir into pumpkin mixture in two additions. Mix in dried cranberries and walnuts. Divide batter equally between prepared pans. Bake until tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 1 hour 10 minutes. Transfer to racks, and cool 10 minutes. Using sharp knife, cut around edge of loaves. Turn loaves out onto racks, and cool completely. ●

*Accessories provided by Babcock Gifts.*