The most popular use of pumpkins may be for jack-o-lanterns and fall decorations but they have many more uses.

When selecting a pumpkin for cooking, the best selection is a “pie pumpkin” or “sweet pumpkin.” These are smaller than the large jack-o-lantern pumpkins and the flesh is sweeter and less watery. You can substitute the jack-o-lantern variety with fairly good results.

Pumpkin seeds can be used in tossed salads, casseroles, soups, and other baked goods, either ground or whole. Although roasted pumpkin seeds tend to be better-tasting, you’ll receive higher nutritional value from the raw seeds.

So decorate your place with a pumpkin and make something tasty, all from the same wonderful fruit!

### Pumpkin Past:

- Native Americans introduced the pilgrims to pumpkins and corn. They taught the pilgrims how to grow and cook pumpkin and how to prepare dried pumpkin to last through the winter. The dried pumpkins were also used as mats.

- The Irish were the first to carve their pumpkins. They originally used turnips, but switched to pumpkins because they were more abundant and easier to carve.

- Stewed pumpkin was so much a part of the pilgrims' diet that one settler in 1630 wrote: “We have pumpkins at morn, and pumpkins at noon, if it were not for pumpkins we should be undone.”

### Fresh Facts

**Roasted Pumpkin Seeds:**

1 c. pumpkin seeds, cleaned
1 TBSP Butter, melted
1/2 tsp. salt or other seasoning

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine pumpkin seeds, butter and salt in medium bowl. Spread pumpkin seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally.

**OR TRY THIS VERSION**

1 quart water
2 TBSP salt
2 c. pumpkin seeds
1 TBSP vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 275 degrees. Remove stringy fibers from seeds. Bring water and salt to a boil. Add the seeds and boil for 12 minutes. Drain. Toss seeds in a bowl with oil. Spread evenly on a cookie sheet, and bake for about 30 minutes. Stir every 10 minutes. Cool and enjoy.

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Real Pumpkin Pie

2 c. pumpkin, cut into half-inch pieces
1/4 cup liquid from cooked pumpkin
1 c. raisins, soaked in 1/4 cup dark rum
1 c. sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1 tbsp. molasses
1 tbsp butter
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
1 egg yolk, beaten

Directions: This recipe uses cubes of raw pumpkin rather than canned pumpkin. Winter squash may also be used.

In medium saucepan, add 1 tbsp. of butter and 1/2 cup water to pumpkin, and simmer over medium heat, for about 10 minutes. Drain, reserving 1/4 cup liquid. Mash or puree pumpkin. Add raisins, rum, cooked pumpkin, and remaining ingredients. Stir until well combined.

Turn into pastry lined 9 in. pie plate. flute edges. Set in preheated 400 degree oven. Bake 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake about 30 minutes longer. The pie is done when a knife inserted near the middle comes out clean.

The name pumpkin originated from the Greek word for “large melon” which is “Pepon.” Then the Pepon went through cultural phases and was known as “Pompon”, then Pumpion, and eventually to what we call it today, the PUMPKIN.