

Picking the Perfect Pumpkin

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www.minnesotagrown.com

What would fall be without the pumpkin? As the most famous of all winter squashes, pumpkins have a special place in our hearts. There are so many fun activities involving pumpkins from baking pies, to picking the perfect pumpkin in the patch, to carving Jack-O-Lanterns for Halloween, and more. Buy [Minnesota Grown pumpkins](#) this fall and ensure yourself a local pumpkin experience! Picking your pumpkin at a [local pumpkin patch](#) offers a fun on-the-farm experience for the whole family!



We spoke with Minnesota Grown members, [The Great Pumpkin Patch](#) and [Twiete's Family Farm](#) for the inside scoop on having a fun family experience at the patch this year!

Peggy Bronk, from [The Great Pumpkin Patch](#), is looking forward to another great year. "Our pumpkins are just beautiful this year," she shared with us. The Great Pumpkin Patch is a family owned and operated farm near Winona. Peggy sees families come out year after year, building fall memories and traditions that last a lifetime. "We have lots of families come out to visit. We have daycares that come during the week, families come out on the weekend- parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren-all ages are welcome!" Peggy said, "It's a very good family activity. Everyone can get outdoors, plus the kids can get their hands in the dirt and have a little fun."



[richard eeva / photo on flickr](#)

[Tweite's Family Farm](#) is another example of the fun to be had this fall! Tweite's Family Farm is in Byron. We spoke with Tom Tweite about the upcoming season, which will be their 27th year of fall fun, "We are already open and are looking forward to welcome a second generation of parents who remember visiting Tweite's Pumpkin Patch when they were children and new folks as well!" Tom told us, "it's the memories and traditions that keep them coming back. We take great pride in our role as a wholesome family entertainment destination. We hope to continue growing and improving year after year. It is our hope to give each family some M and M's (Magical Moments)." Get out and go local this fall by finding a local farm near you!

To find your local source of fall fun, search www.MinnesotaGrown.com.

How to Pick Your Pumpkin:

Pumpkins come in endless varieties. When you're visiting a local pumpkin patch or at your local grocery store, farmers market, or co-op, how do you know which pumpkin to choose for each purpose? To find the perfect pumpkin, follow these tips!

For carving:



Photo from Fair Haven Farm

Look for a firm pumpkin that still has a 1 to 2 inch strong sturdy stem attached. A strong firm pumpkin will last longer than those with thin stems and soft spots. Choose pumpkins without cracks and with one presentable side to showcase your carving.

Don't be fooled! The orange-est pumpkin is not always the ripest. Many varieties come in varying shades and colors!

Try these tips to help your carved pumpkin last until Halloween:

- Coat the edges of your carving in petroleum jelly or vegetable oil to slow the pumpkin's decomposition
 - Keep your pumpkin out of direct sunlight during the day
 - Cover your pumpkin with a wet towel when it is not on display
- If you have room in the refrigerator, place your carved pumpkin there overnight

For cooking:

Pumpkins for cooking are usually smaller than the typical Jack-O-Lantern variety. They contain a sweeter flesh that is less water and will work better for your favorite recipes.

Pumpkins can be baked, roasted, steamed, boiled, or made into your favorite sweet treats! Pumpkins are low in calories but high in healthy fibers, Vitamin A, and potassium. Don't forget about those savory pumpkin seeds! Try the Kakai



Pumpkin variety, Snack Jack, Baby Bear next time you make roasted pumpkin seeds. You can figure that one pound of raw, untrimmed pumpkin will yield around one cup of finished pumpkin puree. A 5 pound pumpkin will make roughly two 9 inch pies.

If you plan to store your pumpkin, heavier is better! Pick pumpkins that feel heavy for their size, ensuring a good amount of flesh inside. A fatter pumpkin will sweeten over a few months of storage.

Pumpkin flesh freezes well and will keep frozen for up to a year. Cut up your pumpkin, bake and mash the flesh, and store it in portioned plastic bags in your freezer. This way, you can enjoy your favorite pumpkin recipe throughout the year! This frozen local pumpkin can be substituted in the same amount for any recipe calling for canned pumpkin.



Delicious Pie Pumpkin Varieties:

Cinderella, Pink Banana, Sugar Pie, Blue Hubbard, and more! Ask your farmer for tips!

Did you know... that often times the pumpkin pie filling you buy in the store is *not* actually pumpkin, and it doesn't need to be! Keep that in mind when you are making your favorite pumpkin breads, pies, or bars and try using one of those squashes you have purchased. To make a squash puree (reminiscent of that can of pie filling) simply take your squash – any kind will do – cut it in half, scoop out the seeds, and put each half cut side down on a rimmed baking sheet. Cook these in a 400-degree oven until you can easily make an impression in the skin of the squash with your finger. This can take anywhere between 20 and 40 minutes. Then, scoop the flesh from the skin and puree in a food processor or blender. This also keeps well in the freezer!

To decorate:

Did you know pumpkins can be dark green, blue, green with stripes, yellow, tan, pink, white, or bright red? Try a variety you have never seen before! There are so many varieties of pumpkins each with their own shape and color! Mix up your fall décor with interesting new pumpkin types, squashes, and gourds!

Looking for fun decorating ideas? Check out our [FALLing for Minnesota](#) Pinterest board for DIY projects and activities!

For more information on the many pumpkin varieties, [check out this website!](#)



To find your local pumpkin patch, use www.MinnesotaGrown.com!

Don't forget the pumpkin seeds!

Check out this recipe from PBSparents.org to make roasted pumpkin seeds after carving!
(Photo and recipe from: <http://www.pbs.org/food/recipes/jills-roasted-pumpkin-seeds/>)

Ingredients

- Pumpkin Seeds
- Salt

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Scoop out all the seeds from the inside of a pumpkin and place them in a large bowl. Pick out as much of the flesh and strings from the bowl but don't worry if some are still sticking to the seeds.
3. Spray a baking sheet with non stick spray or line with parchment paper. Spread the seeds across the baking sheet without overlapping too much and lightly season with salt.
4. Bake for about 20 minutes or until the pumpkin seeds are light golden brown. Be sure to stir the seeds halfway through the baking.
5. Remove from oven and carefully stir the seeds again to release any that may have stuck to the baking sheet.
6. Be sure to allow the pumpkin seeds to completely cool before serving. Enjoy!

