

What To Do With Pumpkins

By E. York Klker, N. C. Department of Agriculture

Pumpkins were being grown by the Indians in North America when the first colonists landed in this country. The following verse indicates how the early settlers used pumpkins: "For pottage, and puddings, and custards, and pies, Our pumpkins and parsnips are common supplies. We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins at noon; If it were not for pumpkins, we should be undone."

Piles of pumpkins brighten the landscape all across the North Carolina countryside and reveal a plentiful harvest. Many of the pumpkins may have turned into artistic jack-o-lanterns, but there will be plenty remaining for eating pleasures.

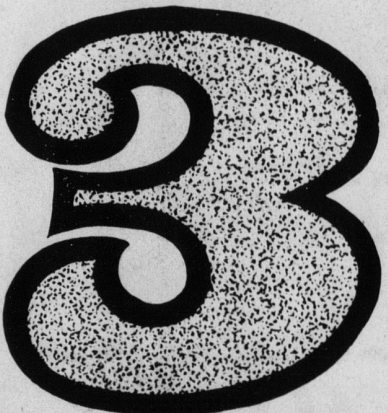
Buying tips remind us to look for well matured, not broken or cracked, pumpkins, which are free from soft rot and excessive scarring. The color should be a rich orange. Basic cooking directions are to halve or quarter the pumpkin, remove the seeds and stringy portions, cut into small pieces, and then cut off the rind. Cook covered in a very small amount of lightly salted boiling water for 25-30 minutes. (Pumpkins are watery vegetables similar to squash and require little additional water.) When pumpkin has cooked until tender, drain, if necessary, to remove excess liquid. Mash well and use as desired. One five pound pumpkin yields about four and one half cups of mashed cooked pumpkin.

Mashed pumpkin can be reheated with butter and seasonings, then served as a vegetable. Although pumpkin pies are traditional, the early settlers knew enjoyment need not be limited to pies.

A friend shared her Pumpkin Freeze recipe, which would add an elegant touch to a holiday meal. A specialty in one area of North Carolina is the Pumpkin Marmalade similar to the recipe secured from the Extension Service. Even though the Roasted Pumpkin Seeds recipe has not been tested yet by the Tarheel Kitchen home economist, it sounds like a fun recipe for the younger set.

PUMPKIN FREEZE
36 gingersnaps for crust
2 cups cooked, sieved pumpkin
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 gallon vanilla ice cream, softened

Prepare gingersnaps for crust by crushing in blender or with a rolling pin. Line a 13" x 9" x 2" glass dish with half of the gingersnap crumbs. Reserve remaining crumbs. Mix cooked pumpkin with sugar, salt, and spices. Fold pumpkin mixture into softened ice cream using low speed on mixer. Spread half of the pumpkin mixture in the crumb-lined dish. Spread with most of the reserved crumbs and add another layer of the pumpkin mixture. Sprinkle a few remaining ginger crumbs on top. Freeze. Cut into 16 squares for serving. Garnish with whipped cream, cherry or nuts as desired.



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