

# How to Use the Whole Pumpkin



Do you try to use the whole pumpkin when you cook? Pumpkins are simply amazing, as a decoration and in taste, and nutritionally. A great vegetable all wrapped up in a very cute package. Since the pumpkin is such a wonder of nature we should learn how to use the whole pumpkin! I look forward to pumpkin season every year, and as soon as September gets rolling, I am looking for ways to [decorate with pumpkins in my home and yard](#). I have been accused of rushing the fall season by getting the pumpkins out early. But, hey, some people rush the Christmas holiday, I rush the fall holidays. Its my thing!



The first festival that includes pumpkins in a big way is Halloween. Not necessarily my favorite of holidays but I forgive it and put up with it because jack o' lanterns are so much fun to make. Actually, my favorite holiday is Thanksgiving. The fall colors and delicious food combine to fill my senses. And pumpkins play a part both in the food, and in the decorations.

November starts the annual cooking of the pumpkins at our home. This year I gathered quite a collection of different pumpkins, most of which we grew here from heirloom seeds from last years pumpkins. Last year we had a gift of many organic heirloom pumpkins from a local grocery (David's Natural Market in Gambrills) and after feeding the pumpkins to the pigs, they nicely obliged by planting the seeds and tilling them into the ground for us! We had pumpkins growing everywhere!

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1. Cook the pumpkin to make delicious pumpkin puree
2. Save the seeds from heirloom pumpkins to plant more next year.
3. Roast the seeds for a delicious snack food.
4. Treat your livestock to fresh or cooked pumpkin. The health benefits are good for them too. And pumpkin seeds contain something that is a natural de-wormer. Feeding pumpkin and pumpkin seeds to your chickens will encourage good intestinal tract health.
5. If you don't know me or someone else with farm animals, place the pumpkins near the back of your property and help the wildlife! The birds, deer, squirrels and chipmunks will all enjoy your leftover pumpkins.

Really, why let any part of the pumpkin go to waste when there are so many ways to use the whole pumpkin.

## Cooking the Pumpkin

Slice the pumpkin in half. Scoop out the innards and put them in a colander. Put the pumpkin halves face down on a foil lined baking sheet. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes at 350 degrees F or until fork tender. You can also read more about [making pumpkin puree here from The Easy Homestead.](#)



The pumpkin is cooked when a fork pierces the skin and flesh easily.



**Separating the seeds for saving and roasting.**

In the meantime, decide how you want to use the inside goopy part of the pumpkin. If my chickens had their way, every

single pumpkin and gooey seedy inside goodness would come their way. And since I cook so many pumpkins for our winter eating, the chickens receive plenty of pumpkin goodness. And so do the pigs, master gardeners that they are. But first, I grab some seeds from this line of pumpkins and roast some seeds. Start by rinsing the seeds and pumpkin guts under cold running water.



The stringy gooey stuff does end up in the chicken pen and I try to leave a few seeds for the chickens too. After separating the seeds from the goo, drain the seeds on paper towels. Be careful, they are slippery little devils! I saved about three dozen seeds to save for planting next spring. These seeds were laid on a paper towel to dry for about a week. Then they were stored in an envelope, saved for future years to use the whole pumpkin in baking, and cooking.

The rest of the seeds I prepared to roast. Melt a table spoon or two of butter, depending on the amount of seeds. This was a small pumpkin so I only needed one tablespoon of butter. Mix

the seeds and seasoning and salt in a bowl with the butter. I used a seasoned salt and regular salt this time. You may want to try some garlic salt, a spicy blend or your favorite seasoning. Olive oil can be used in place of butter if you prefer. Bake in preheated oven 350 degrees F for about 20 to 25 minutes, looking for the seeds to be a light golden brown. Be careful because towards the end, the browning can turn to burning, quickly. I also recommend this post from [The FlipFlop Barnyard on roasting pumpkins seeds.](#)



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# How to Use the Whole Pumpkin!



## What to do with the cooked pumpkin?

Okay, the pumpkin is cooked. Now what? After it cools, scrape the flesh from the skin. Put it in a bowl and using a potato masher or an immersion blender, puree the pumpkin. Store the pumpkin in the refrigerator and use with in a few days, or freeze it. Do not attempt to can pumpkin puree. If you choose to pressure can the pumpkin, it must be in chunks not puree. The skin? Well that can be fed to your chickens or you can dehydrate pieces of the skin in your dehydrator for crispy pumpkin chips! Now that's a way to use the whole pumpkin!



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Many people bake delicious recipes while using the whole pumpkin. [Mom Prepares has compiled a list of ten recipes](#) that you can try. Pumpkin is a tasty ingredient in pancakes, cookies, breads, and desserts. I used the pumpkin puree to make a decadent [Chocolate Chip Pumpkin Bread](#). Give that recipe a try soon! I am sure you will agree, it's worth the effort to use the whole pumpkin!

How many of these methods do you use when you have pumpkins?



For more on feeding healthy pumpkin to your chickens and livestock check out these posts>

[Chicken Gardening](#)

[Pumpkin, Garlic and Nasturtium Soup for Chickens](#)