

Ask an Expert – Why Pumpkin Deserves a Place on Your Plate

Jenna Dyckman

10/16/2026

```
$(document).ready(function(){ $(''.pdf-wrapper').hide();
$(''.pageTitle').addClass('text-bold'); });
```

Many people buy pumpkins for fall décor and carving. But the next time you buy pumpkins, consider buying extras for cooking. Pumpkins are low in calories and packed with key nutrients that help keep our bodies healthy, especially during cold and flu season.

The [Cleveland Clinic](#) notes five benefits of pumpkin:

1. **Good for eye health.** Pumpkins are a great source of vitamin A and other nutrients that help protect our eyes from age-related degeneration and cataracts.
2. **Good for heart health.** Heart disease is a prevalent chronic disease in America. Eating foods that are good sources of heart-healthy nutrients can decrease the risk of heart disease. Pumpkins are rich in potassium, fiber, and antioxidants, all of which are beneficial for heart health.
3. **Boosts the immune system.** Vitamin C is usually the first nutrient we think of when it comes to preventing colds or flu. Pumpkins are a great source of vitamin C and other immune-boosting nutrients, including vitamins A and E and iron.
4. **Contains carotenoids.** Carotenoids are the pigments produced by yellow, orange, and red plants. Carotenoids may help protect against certain types of cancer.
5. **Great for snacking.** If you don't want to cook your pumpkin, save the seeds when you scoop them out for carving. Clean the seeds, season them lightly, and roast them in the oven for the perfect fall snack. Roasted seeds also offer great health benefits.

Pumpkins can be a healthy addition to a balanced eating pattern. Consider incorporating them into your cooking this fall. When buying pumpkins for cooking, make sure they are labeled as "cooking" pumpkins, which are more tender

and thinner, making them better suited for cooking than regular carving pumpkins.

Try these recipes to get started.

1. Homemade pumpkin puree: <https://www.thepioneerwoman.com/food-cooking/recipes/a11184/make-your-own-pumpkin-puree/>.
2. How to freeze homemade pumpkin puree: <https://www.thepioneerwoman.com/food-cooking/cooking-tips-tutorials/a45686740/can-you-freeze-pumpkin-puree/>.
3. Pumpkin soup: <https://cookieandkate.com/creamy-vegan-pumpkin-soup/>.
4. Fall salad with roasted pumpkin: <https://themodernproper.com/roasted-sweet-potato-salad-with-orange-vinaigrette/>. (Substitute roasted pumpkin for roasted sweet potato in the recipe.)

Contact

Jenna Dyckman

Utah State University Extension assistant professor
Jenna.Dyckman@usu.edu

More Extension Updates

- [Extension News](#)
- [Gardening](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Relationships](#)
- [Our Impact](#)

[Tips Sign Up](#) [Take a Course](#) [Donate to Extension](#)