

# Baking with Fresh Pumpkin



Everywhere you look, you see pumpkins. There are white ones, big ones, small ones, and even Cinderella pumpkins, but if you want to use it later, which one should you choose for baking or cooking?

*Use small pie pumpkins for baking. They tend to be less stringy. Save larger field pumpkins for your jack-o-lanterns.*

## **When selecting a pumpkin for cooking, save the field pumpkins for your jack o' lanterns.**

These tend to be too large and stringy for baking. Choose smaller ones for baking, those less than 10 pounds, with firm, dense flesh.

In supermarkets you'll see Sugar Pumpkins as one of the most common baking pumpkins. Often they are labeled "pie pumpkins." Other types that are great for baking include Baby Pam, Autumn Gold, Fairytale and Cinderella Pumpkins, all of which have a good consistency and flavor. You may be able to find these heirloom varieties at farmers markets or local farms.

## **Determine yield from pumpkin size**

When determining what size you need, it's helpful to know that a medium-sized, 4-pound sugar pumpkin should yield around one and one half cups of mashed pumpkin. This puree can be used in any recipes calling for canned pumpkin.

Turning that pumpkin into puree will yield a flavorful baked good that does not compare to canned. Although it does take time, the flavor will be much better. There are three ways you can make the puree – bake, microwave or boil.

## **Bake, microwave or boil?**

The most popular is to **bake the pumpkin** to get the puree.

1. Start with a knife and a large meat mallet (to tap the knife).
2. Cut the pumpkin in half; discard the stem section and stringy pulp.
3. Save the seeds to dry and roast. In a shallow baking dish, place the two halves face down and cover with foil.
4. Bake in a preheated 375 degrees F oven for about one and one half hours or until tender.

5. Once cooled, scoop the flesh into a food processor and puree until smooth. If the puree is too liquid, simmer in a large skillet over medium heat for a few minutes to evaporate some of the water.

This will yield 1 cup puree for every pound of pumpkin. If you have more puree than needed, freeze the rest in a freezer quality bag or container. Leave one half inch headspace.

A less used process involves **boiling the pumpkin** to get to the pulp.

1. Using the knife and mallet method above, cut the pumpkin in half, discarding the stringy insides.
2. Peel and cut into chunks. Place in saucepan and cover with water.
3. Bring to a boil and cook until the pumpkin chunks are tender.
4. Drain well in a colander and let the cool.
5. Then puree the flesh in a food processor or mash with a potato masher or food mill.

Using the **microwave to prepare your pumpkin** for puree is also an option.

1. Cut the pumpkin in half, discarding the stringy insides and saving the seeds.
2. Place on a microwave safe bowl and cook on high for 7 minutes per pound, turning pieces every few minutes for even cooking.
3. Process as above.

Once you've chosen your preferred method, you now have pumpkin puree for baking. If you are not going to bake right away, **refrigerate up to three days**, or **store it in the freezer up to six months**. You now have pumpkin puree for months in baking muffins, pies, pancakes, breads, cakes, even soups.

### **Should I just use canned pumpkin?**

I know you may be thinking I will just buy canned pumpkin or canned pumpkin pie filling and save time. That is ok. One (15 ounce) can pumpkin is just shy 2 cups fresh cooked pumpkin. Know the difference. Canned pumpkin is just cooked, pureed pumpkin. Pumpkin pie filling is flavored with spices like cinnamon, clove, allspice and ginger, and sugar. There is a difference in the two.

If you are looking for a moist, easy pumpkin recipe and want something different from pie, this Pumpkin Praline Cake is the answer.

# Pumpkin Praline Cake

- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 2 cups pumpkin puree
- 1/2 cup applesauce or vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 3/4 cup egg substitute or 3 eggs

## Filling:

- 1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts
  - 1 stick margarine or butter, softened
  - 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1. Combine first eight ingredients in order given.
  2. Slowly add egg.
  3. Pour one fourth of the batter into a greased tube pan that has been coated with butter and flour.
  4. In small bowl, combine filling ingredients; mix well.
  5. Place on top of batter in pan; carefully pour remaining batter over top of nut mixture.
  6. Bake 1 hour at 350 degrees or until toothpick or cake tester comes out clean.
  7. Remove from pan and place on cooling rack to cool.

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