

FESTIVE & EDIBLE PUMPKINS

Pumpkins- Decoration or Food?

Fall is such a wonderful season for colorful falling leaves, hay rides, carved jack-o'-lanterns, Halloween costumes, pumpkin flavored foods, autumn gatherings, and pumpkin patches!

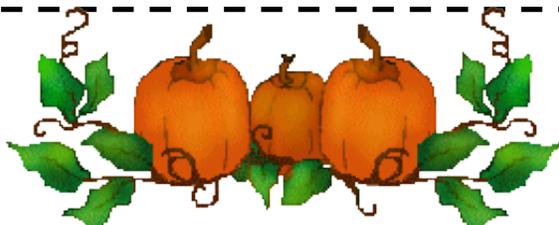
Pumpkin carving is one the best Halloween activities families can engage in together, if it is done in a safe and controlled environment. Most children love digging out the seeds and strings of the inside of a pumpkin and decorating pumpkins with glitter, glue, craft paint and markers. This is a great time for family bonding and this creates some of the best holiday memories.

Festive pre-painted and decorated pumpkins are available for purchase in stores. I have received questions on whether these craft-painted pumpkins are safe to eat after the holiday.

Are pumpkins decorated with craft paint edible?

“It is well known that glitter and other decorating materials are not intended for human consumption. There is little research on whether craft paint and markers penetrate the flesh of pumpkins or on the toxicity of other decorative products used on pumpkins. Mature pumpkins have quite thick skins. If these pumpkins are painted, individuals can wash the paint off the outside of the pumpkin (if possible), at the end of the display. This washing also eliminates any remaining dirt. Then carefully peel and/or cut the skin off before using the flesh and seeds for food.”

- Dr. Amarat Simonne, Professor and Extension Specialist (Food Safety and Quality) UF/IFAS Extension Family Youth and Community Sciences



Kitchen Knife Safety

1. Always cut away from your finger or other body parts.
2. A sharp, clean knife is a safe knife. Dull knives have to be pushed harder to cut.
3. Use a large cutting board.
4. Store knives in a knife block or in a sheath.
5. Stay focused while using a knife.
6. Hold a knife securely when cutting which allows for control and a steady hand.
7. Stand up straight when cutting; this helps maintain balance.
8. Do not try to catch a falling knife.
9. Knife safety is important. Always supervise children that are using knives in the kitchen.
10. Always be careful when handling knives.



For additional information please contact:

Brenda Marty-Jimenez, MHM, RD, LD/N, FAND
Broward County Extension Agent IV
3245 College Avenue
Davie, FL 33314-7719
Phone: (954) 357-5277
Fax: (954) 357-8740
Email: bjimenez@broward.org
bjimenez@ufl.edu
Visit us on the web:

<http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/broward/family-and-consumer-sciences/>
<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/browardco/>

There are other safety considerations to keep in mind. Families and consumers should be informed about these safety concerns. All pumpkins should be carved by an adult and/or youth should only carve pumpkins under the supervision of an adult.

Knife safety should be prioritized at this time of the year. There are special pumpkin carving tools that are specifically designed to help with this activity. Children should be supervised closely if using a knife to carve a pumpkin, since their motor skills may not be fully developed. Younger children with poor hand-eye coordination should not use knives.

If you would like to use pumpkin in your favorite recipe, buy two pumpkins, one for carving and decorating and the other one for eating. This will also help sustain and support pumpkin farmers!

Pumpkin soup, pumpkin seeds, fresh roasted pumpkin, pumpkin pie and pumpkin bread, are among some of our favorite foods. Think about food safety when planning to prepare these foods using fresh pumpkin. After a carved pumpkin has been left at room temperature for several hours or even days, the meat is *not* safe to eat. Bacteria can begin to grow, and you don't want to risk a foodborne illness. Do not let cut pumpkin sit out at room temperature for more than two hours during preparation, prior to use.

When in doubt, throw it out!

Lastly pumpkins do have some nutritional value. Pumpkins are a source of vitamin A, beta-carotene, vitamin C, potassium and fiber.



For more information:

UF/IFAS Extension Broward County <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/broward/family-and-consumer-sciences/>

UF/IFAS Extension SolutionsForYourLife.com

UF/IFAS Extension Broward County Blog articles <http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/browardco/>

USDA Choose MyPlate- <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/pumpkin>

National Center for Home Food Preservation website- <https://nchfp.uga.edu/tips/fall/pumpkins.html>

Pumpkin-cucurbita spp- <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/MV/MV11600.pdf>

Health Benefits of Pumpkin Seed and Nutrition profile of 35 Pumpkin Accessions- <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/HS/HS131200.pdf>

UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA