



# pumpkin, pumpkin, pumpkin!

October is the month for pumpkins! Get some fresh organic pumpkins now to process for your pets, snacks for yourself, and free bird seed for your feathered friends—and your own fresh home made pumpkin pies. Pumpkins are elemental in our Halloween tradition, color, shape, jack-o'-lanterns in part because this is their season of abundance, and they are a most versatile and nutritious fruit. Pumpkins actually originated in Central America and Native Americans planted them as one of the “three sisters” of corn, pole beans and squash interplanted to support each other. They are grown all over the world, and in many cultures are much more than a seasonal decoration but are a principle food source for their ease of growth and high nutritional value.

## PUMPKIN FOR YOUR PETS

- Softens the stool in the case of constipation and helps bind loose stool by absorbing excess fluid and soothing inflamed intestines in the case of diarrhea.
- Nutrition delivered in a readily accessible form: beta carotene and vitamins A and C and mineral potassium.

## BASIC DOSAGE

**The basic dose is about one teaspoon per 15 pounds. Mix with canned food or dose gently with syringe.**

**MOST CATS AND VERY SMALL DOGS:** one teaspoon; **LARGER CATS AND SMALL TO MEDIUM DOGS:** two teaspoons; **DOGS LARGER THAN 30 POUNDS:** three teaspoons/one tablespoon. Many pets, including cats, really like it. It's safe enough to give every day, and if they don't need it, it doesn't do any harm.

## BUY CANNED OR BUY FRESH LOCAL PUMPKINS AND EASILY PREPARE

**CANNED PUMPKIN:** Only purchase canned “pumpkin”, not “pumpkin pie filling” or a can with any other ingredients.

**FRESH PUMPKIN:** All pumpkins have about the same amount of fiber and nutrients, varying amounts of fruit sugar.

- **The smaller pumpkins**, like a small plastic play ball, three pounds, 20 inches circumference, “pie pumpkins”, fine smooth flesh and more sugar than average.
- **The medium-sized pumpkins**, used for jack-o'-lanterns, field pumpkins often fed to livestock, about 75% as much sugar, generally this is preferable for pets.
- **The extra-large ones** seen in competitions are raised for size and weight, not nutrition, but have fiber and buckets of seeds.

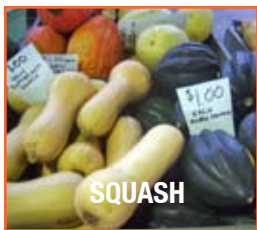
**OTHER WINTER SQUASHES** Pumpkin is a winter squash like butternut or acorn, all have about the same amount of fiber and nutrition.

**GOURDS** Gourds are edible but don't have any of the nutrition or fiber you'd find in pumpkin, use them for decoration.



## PREPARING YOUR PUMPKIN

**The small “pie pumpkin” or 3 lbs. raw pumpkin will yield about two cups of pureed pumpkin by either method.**



**ROASTING** Preheat oven to 350.

- Cut pumpkin in half top to bottom, pull off stem and toss on floor for cat toy, scoop out seeds and keep in a bowl.
- Place halves of pumpkin in a shallow pan with ¼-cup of water, cover with foil, roast for at least one hour, until tender.
- Let cool, peel, cut into chunks and mash or puree in food processor.

**STEWING** Halve and quarter pumpkin top to bottom, scoop out seeds, keep in a bowl.

- Peel skin and cut flesh into 1” chunks, place in heavy pot, add one cup of water.
- Set on medium heat, cover, check every 15 minutes to stir the chunks, mashing as they soften.
- Remove the lid and cook about an hour to allow moisture to evaporate, stirring frequently, cool.

## STORING YOUR PUMPKIN

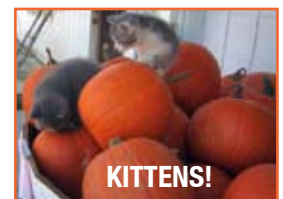
- For pet's use, scoop tablespoons of puree into sections of an ice cube tray, remove one at a time to thaw.
- For larger amounts, freeze by the cupful in plastic containers. A 9” pumpkin pie takes about two cups of pumpkin with other ingredients added.

## PUMPKIN SEEDS

**FOR YOU** Preheat the oven to 300 degrees, rinse the seeds and remove as much of the muck they are stuck to as possible.

- To a bowl that will hold about twice as much in seeds as you have add a quart of water and ¼-cup of salt, stir to dissolve.
- Add seeds, let soak for 30 minutes to an hour, drain off liquid.
- Lightly oil a cookie sheet and place the seeds in a single layer, bake for 20 minutes, stir, bake for 20 minutes more.
- Let seeds cool. Store in tightly closed jar.

**FOR BIRDS** As above, but use only one tablespoon of salt.



## SOME RESOURCES FOR PUMPKIN FACTS

**PUMPKINS FOR PETS:** <http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/1817/>

**USDA AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE, NUTRIENT DATABASE, RELEASE 27:** [http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/cgi-bin/list\\_nut\\_edit.pl](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/cgi-bin/list_nut_edit.pl)

Information provided by [www.TheCreativeCat.net](http://www.TheCreativeCat.net) in “Living Green With Pets: Pumpkin, Pumpkin, Pumpkin!” All text and images copyright © Bernadette E. Kazmarski