



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large

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Favorite Fruit of Fall

Pumpkin Power

Red, orange and yellow leaves and bright orange pumpkins make autumn glow with color. It wouldn't be Halloween without jack-o'-lanterns. In many homes, it wouldn't be Thanksgiving without pumpkin pie.

To learn more about this favorite fall fruit, The Mini Page talked with an expert from Ohio State University.

Jack with a lantern

About 400 years ago, "Jack-o'-Lantern" was a nickname for a real person. It meant "a man of the lantern," or a night watchman. The British used to call an unnamed man "Jack." This was like using "Joe" in terms such as "G.I. Joe" or "a regular Joe."

People later called mysterious lights appearing over the marshes jack-o'-lanterns, or will-o'-the-wisps.



photo courtesy Office of TourismOhio

A pumpkin carver displays his work at the Circleville Pumpkin Show in Ohio. Many communities hold pumpkin and jack-o'-lantern festivals and contests.



photo © Smileitsmcheeze, Dreamstime.com

By the late 1800s in America, it was popular to carve jack-o'-lanterns for Halloween decorations. In the early 1900s, Americans decorated with jack-o'-lanterns at Thanksgiving as well.

Lighting up the vegetables

Hundreds of years ago, the English, Irish and Scots made candlelit lanterns out of different fruits and vegetables, such as turnips, apples, beets, potatoes and cucumbers.

In Scotland and Ireland, people carved scary faces out of these fruits and vegetables and placed candles inside. They hoped the creepy lighted faces would scare off evil spirits. In the 1800s, boys in Great Britain began playing tricks, frightening people with the spooky vegetable lights.

American Colonists realized that pumpkins were the best vegetable of all for carving out a lantern.

Spooky tale

There is an Irish legend, or old story, that says the jack-o'-lantern was named after a man called Stingy Jack. He tricked the devil, forcing him to keep Jack out of hell. But God didn't think he was a very good man, so he wouldn't let Jack into heaven either.

The devil condemned Jack to wander over the Earth at night. His only light was a turnip lantern lit with fire from hell. The legend says the Irish named this eerie ghost Jack-o'-Lantern.

Many European countries have their own stories about the beginning of the jack-o'-lantern.

A Family of Pumpkins

Yes, it's a fruit

One way of classifying pumpkins is by how they taste. We think of fruits as the sweet parts of plants. Pumpkins are not that sweet. That's why we see them as vegetables.

However, **botanists**, or plant scientists, organize plants by how they grow and look. In science, a pumpkin is a fruit.

Fruits grow from the female parts of flowers. They carry the seeds for reproduction.



Photo by Jeremy Seitz, courtesy USDA

There are about 30 types of pumpkins. They come in many colors, including orange, white, yellow, green, gray, red, tan and blue.

The fruit of a pumpkin is called a **pepo** (PEA-poe), from the Greek word "pepon," meaning "ripe gourd." The word "pumpkin" comes from a Latin version of "pepon" — "pompion."

All in the family

Pumpkins are members of the **cucurbit** (kyoo-KUHR-bit) family. Their close cousins include squashes, gourds, cucumbers, watermelons and cantaloupes.



photo courtesy USDA

Most cucurbits have big, star-shaped flowers; hairy, hollow stems; long vines and a thick outer covering.

To eat or not to eat

Pumpkins grown to make jack-o'-lanterns are **edible**, or fit to eat. But they are not as tasty as pumpkins grown especially for food.

Pumpkins are a very healthy food. This low-calorie fruit is filled with vitamins A, C and B, fiber and minerals such as potassium and iron. Pumpkin pie is a holiday favorite, but pumpkin is great in soups, breads, cookies, butter and casseroles, too. Roasted pumpkin seeds are a healthy snack.



photo courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

Kids play on pumpkins near a fresh produce stand. Many farmers allow customers to pick their own pumpkins.

Ready Resources



The Mini Page provides ideas for websites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week's topics.

On the Web:

- abt.cm/1Bv3V9L
- urbanext.illinois.edu/pumpkins
- history.com/topics/halloween/pumpkin-facts
- pumpkinnook.com/facts.htm

At the library:

- "Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden" by George Levenson
- "Me and the Pumpkin Queen" by Marlane Kennedy



Try
'n'
Find

Pumpkins

P	F	G	N	I	V	I	G	S	K	N	A	H	T	P
U	F	R	T	I	B	R	U	C	U	C	P	O	S	L
M	S	A	U	L	B	E	V	R	A	C	I	R	H	A
P	E	S	L	I	T	A	E	E	E	B	E	A	E	N
K	E	B	T	L	T	Y	K	O	O	P	S	N	L	T
I	D	L	U	E	N	R	E	T	N	A	L	G	L	K
N	S	V	M	Y	M	R	E	W	O	L	F	E	M	D
S	S	N	I	M	A	T	I	V	K	O	O	C	A	R
N	E	E	W	O	L	L	A	H	K	C	A	J	T	Y

Words that remind us of pumpkins are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally. See if you can find: BEE, BUY, CARVE, COOK, CUCURBIT, DRY, EAT, FALL, FLOWER, FRUIT, HALLOWEEN, JACK, LANTERN, MAT, ORANGE, PIE, PLANT, PUMPKINS, SEEDS, SHELL, SPOOKY, STEM, THANKSGIVING, VITAMINS.



Mini Spy

Mini Spy and Basset Brown love to carve jack-o'-lanterns. See if you can find: kite pencil

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bell | <input type="checkbox"/> letter E | <input type="checkbox"/> drum | <input type="checkbox"/> sword |
| <input type="checkbox"/> letter A | <input type="checkbox"/> sock | <input type="checkbox"/> ladder | <input type="checkbox"/> word MINI |
| <input type="checkbox"/> teacup | <input type="checkbox"/> pineapple | <input type="checkbox"/> heart | <input type="checkbox"/> number 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tomato | <input type="checkbox"/> bird | <input type="checkbox"/> letter Z | <input type="checkbox"/> key |



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Rookie Cookie's Recipe Pumpkin Smoothie

You'll need:

- 1 can low-sodium pumpkin, chilled (about 15 ounces)
- 1 can evaporated low-fat milk, chilled (12 ounces)
- 1 1/2 cups orange juice
- 1 small banana (sliced)
- 1/3 cup light brown sugar, packed (or 1/3 cup regular sugar)
- 2 dozen ice cubes (optional)
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon (optional)

What to do:

1. Place pumpkin, evaporated milk, orange juice, banana and sugar in blender.
2. Cover and blend until smooth.
3. If using ice, pour mixture over ice. If using cinnamon, add that too. Serves 6.

You will need an adult's help with this recipe. from The Mini Page © 2014 Universal Uclick

Meet Diego Luna



Photo by Kevin Estrada, courtesy Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp and Peel FX Productions

Diego Luna is the voice of Manolo in the animated movie "The Book of Life." He has appeared in many movies and TV shows in Mexico and the United States. He directed the movie "Chavez" and co-founded a film company.

Diego, 34, was born in Mexico City. His mother was a costume designer, and his father is a set designer. His mother died after a car accident when Diego was 2. He acted in his first movie role when he was about 12. Soon after that he began acting in a Mexican soap opera. Diego supports causes that help migrant farm workers and immigrants.

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Gus Goodsport's Supersport



Height: 6-1
Age: 31

Hometown:
Lara, Venezuela

Gleyber Rodriguez

Each September, every Major League Baseball team is allowed to expand its roster of players from 25 to 40 active players. To fill the additional 15 spots, teams "call up," or promote, players in their minor league system.

Gleyber (WHEEL-dare) Rodriguez became one of these "September call-ups" for the Texas Rangers, and lived out every minor leaguer's dream: a chance to play in the big leagues. For this 31-year-old rookie, the dream became a reality after 13 seasons in the minors. After being signed in 2001, Gleyber appeared in 1,095 minor-league games — the most games ever played without a major league debut. In that time, he played for 10 different teams, had more than 4,000 at-bats, and saw time at every position except catcher — even making five outings as a pitcher.

On Sept. 22, with his wife and his father watching from the stands, Gleyber recorded his first two major-league hits, including a single in the seventh inning that knocked in the game-winning run, setting off a wild celebration with his teammates.

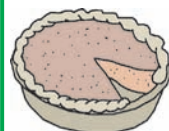


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Mighty Funny's Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Paula: What should you call a fat pumpkin?
Pete: A plumpkin!



Piper: What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?
Perry: Pumpkin pi!



Pepper: What should you give a pumpkin that has a hole in it?
Pia: A pumpkin patch!

The Popular, Powerful Pumpkin

Very important bees

Bees are necessary to pollinate pumpkin plants, or help them reproduce. They carry pollen from the male flowers to the female flowers.

The bees don't have to go far. Male and female flowers grow on the same pumpkin plant.

The pumpkin fruit forms deep inside the female flower. Male flowers bloom for just one day. Then they die and drop off the plant.

Squash bees are the main bees that pollinate pumpkins. Luckily, squash bees are not in danger, unlike many other types of bees.

Some squash bees actually spend the night in the pumpkin flower with the petals closed safely around them. This protects the bees from enemies. It also means they can get a head start on gathering pollen as soon as the flower opens the next day.



photo by Jim Crane, courtesy USDA

Squash bees start pollinating pumpkin flowers before sunrise.

The Mini Page thanks Matthew Kleinhenz, professor and extension vegetable specialist, Ohio State University, for help with this issue.



photo courtesy Office of TourismOhio

About 400,000 visitors come to the Circleville Pumpkin Show in Ohio each October. The town has been hosting this show since 1903.

In 2012, Illinois led the country in pumpkin production, followed by California and Ohio.

Look through your newspaper for stories and pictures about pumpkins.

Touchy crops

Pumpkin farming is a risky business. Pumpkins can be easily harmed by disease, insects and weather.

Imagine you are a farmer growing pumpkins for jack-o'-lanterns. What if your pumpkins mature too early? By Halloween, you could be left with a lot of rotting pumpkins. If the pumpkins mature too late, you'll miss the Halloween rush.

People like to carry pumpkins by the stems. If the stems break off, people won't buy them. But if the stems are too big, they can damage the pumpkins next to them.

The skins need to be pretty, without big spots. If pumpkins are flat or weirdly shaped, people won't buy them. Size makes a difference.

Next week, The Mini Page honors the 25th anniversary of the destruction of the Berlin Wall.

Pumpkin past

Pumpkins are native to the Americas. The seeds have been found at 10,000-year-old sites in Mexico.

Native Americans ate the fruit, seeds, flowers and leaves. They roasted pumpkins in the fire or cooked the fruit in soups, puddings or a type of pie. By mixing the fruit with syrup, they made a kind of pumpkin jelly. They cut and dried strips of pumpkin fruit to preserve it.

After drying strips of the shell, people wove them together to make mats. They used whole pumpkin shells for bowls and storage vessels.

American Colonists soon caught on. Pumpkins became a top food.



Today's pumpkin pie recipe is much like the Colonists', calling for spices such as nutmeg and ginger.

The Mini Page Staff

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