



Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe

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Preserve Your Pumpkin Seeds

Pumpkin seeds make a healthy snack, but they often get overlooked when the pumpkin is carved as a jack-o-lantern or prepared for pumpkin pie. Roasting or drying your pumpkin seeds is easy. The finished product makes a great snack or crunchy addition to a salad.

To roast, remove the seeds from the pumpkin and remove the clinging pulp and tissue from around the seeds. Spray a baking sheet with a thin coat of vegetable spray. Place the seeds on a single layer in the pan. Lightly spray the tops of the seeds with vegetable oil. Salt to taste if desired. Bake at 250°F for approximately 15 to 30 minutes or until seeds are lightly browned. After they are cool, they are ready to enjoy!

Pumpkin seeds can be dried by placing them in a dehydrator at 115 to 120°F for one or two hours. If you do not have a food dehydrator, place them on a shallow pan in an oven set on “warm” for three to four hours. Stir the seeds often to prevent burning.

Once the seeds are cool, they can be stored in canning jars, plastic freezer bags or plastic freezer containers with tight-fitting lids. They can also be vacuum packaged.

Pumpkin seeds are a healthy snack. One ounce of roasted pumpkin seeds (approximately 140 seeds) provides 148 calories, nine grams of protein and one gram of fiber. Fats provide most of the calories, but the majority of those fats are the healthier monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

Preserving the Great Pumpkin!

As autumn arrives, pumpkins soon will decorate front porches to celebrate the season, but pumpkins aren't just for show. Pumpkins also can be preserved and their seeds can be dried and roasted for a crunchy snack (see story on page 2). Smaller sugar or pie pumpkin varieties work best for cooking, baking and preserving.

Home canning is not recommended for pumpkin butter or any mashed or pureed pumpkin or winter squash. The only directions for canning pumpkin and winter squash in the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning are for cubed flesh. In fact, the directions for preparing the product include the statement, “Caution: Do not mash or puree.” More information can be found here: http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/uga/pumpkin_butter.html.

Different batches of prepared pumpkin purees vary too much to permit calculation of a single processing recommendation. For example, the thickness, or viscosity, of purees and mashed pumpkin products differs greatly among batches, which affects safe processing requirements. Other safety concerns are the products' low acidity and its water activity, a measurement related to the pumpkin foodstuffs' water content. Pumpkin and winter squash are low-acid foods, so if handled improperly, they can support the growth of *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria.

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Preserving the Great Pumpkin! Continued



These bacteria cause the very serious illness, botulism. If a product has a high enough water activity when these bacteria are present and survive processing, they can thrive and produce toxin in the product. Adding vinegar or lemon juice also may not acidify the pumpkin enough to be safely canned. Pumpkin butter, although it has large quantities of sugar added to it, still may not have low enough water activity to inhibit the growth of dangerous bacteria and fungi.

The safety of a recipe for canning pumpkin or mashed squash can't be evaluated by simply reading it. Instead, freeze pumpkin butters or mashed squash.

Canning Cubed Pumpkin

A canner load of 7 quarts requires an average of 16 pounds of pumpkin. An average of 10 pounds is needed per canner load of 9 pints – an average of 2¼ pounds per quart. Pumpkins and squash should have a hard rind and stringless, mature pulp, the same as would be ideal for cooking fresh.

First, wash the pumpkin and remove its seeds. Then, cut it into 1-inch-wide slices and peel them. Cut the flesh into 1-inch cubes. Boil the cubes for 2 minutes in water. Caution: Do not mash or puree. Fill the jars with pumpkin cubes and cover them with cooking liquid, leaving 1-inch of headspace.

Jar Size	Process Time (minutes)	Dial Gauge Canner		Weighted Gauge Canner	
		0-2,000 feet	2,001-4,000 feet	0-1,000 feet	Above 1,000 feet
Pint	55	11 lb.	12 lb.	10 lb.	15 lb.
Quarts	90	11 lb.	12 lb.	10 lb.	15 lb.

Source: <http://nchfp.uga.edu/tips/fall/pumpkins.html>

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Cinnamon Apple Chips

Fall brings an abundant harvest of local Midwest apples. Using a dehydrator, you can make delicious cinnamon apple chips for all to enjoy! Choose and wash the apple variety of your choice. Some folks prefer to peel the apple, others leave the peel on. Leaving the peel on will create a chewier chip and will take longer to dehydrate, but it also boosts the fiber content of the chip. Core the apples, and cut them into slices or rings about 1/8 inch thick. You want uniform slices, so a mandolin slicer makes this work go much quicker, but be careful with fingers! The apple slices need to be pretreated to prevent darkening, find specific pretreatment details in Quality for Keeps: How to Dry Foods at Home (<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/GH1563>).



Because sugary fruits are sticky, spray the dehydrator drying trays with nonstick cooking spray before placing the fruit on the trays. Once the slices are laid out on the trays, you may sprinkle plain cinnamon or a mixture of cinnamon and sugar over them for cinnamon apple chips. Turn on your food dehydrator and set the temperature between 125°F and 135°F (or per your food dehydrator's instructions) and run for 6 to 12 hours. Occasionally test the pliability of the slices, they should not be sticky or tacky. A good indication that the fruit is done is to fold a slice in half, it should not stick to itself. Remember that the finished product will be crispier once it cools than when it is still warm in the dehydrator. Allow apple chips to cool and then package in an airtight container. Enjoy!

University of Missouri Extension

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