

CUTTING FRESH PUMPKINS - SAFETY FIRST!

Raw fresh pumpkins are wonderful produce! Cooking them fills the air with wonderful aromas! However, working with pumpkins requires close attention when you first open them up. Their skins are a bit tough and the meat of the fruit is quite thick. Also, when cutting around the stem or the bottom of the pumpkin, the fiber presents a lot of resistance. Therefore, when preparing pumpkins for cooking, it is suggested that you do not allow children to get involved with cutting the whole pumpkin. Let them participate in cleaning out the pumpkin seeds and inside fiber (they love the squishy feeling), mixing your final product (cooking is hidden math and measurement learning) and filling dishes and pans.

For safety, make sure that you are working on a non-slip surface and that your knives are sharp. Dull knives or knives that are too large or too small can lead to nasty cuts. Let the knife do the cutting. **Do not** try to force the cuts in long strokes, and **do not** try to pry pieces of pumpkin apart when the rind and skin have not been fully cut through. You can easily lose control of the pumpkin if you attempt to “Muscle” the cutting. Short repeated strokes are better and safer for all involved.

Remember, when you are cutting a large pumpkin, you, the adult are the teacher. Have the kids watch at a safe distance (at least 3 feet and behind your elbows) from the counter or cutting surface and talk all the time to explain what you are doing and the reasons for safety. They will enjoy watching the parts of the pumpkin being exposed as the pumpkin is opened, and will become better cooks when both safety and participation are put together!