

Anatomy of a Pumpkin

(ref: <http://www.pumpkinnook.com/facts/anatomy.htm>)

Pumpkins have been examined, studied, and literally dissected more than any other object. Aside from frogs in Biology class, we can't think of any other item that has been more thoroughly examined in the classroom, or at home.

Young and old kids alike, constantly ask "what's this part" or "what's that part called?" Do you know the entire anatomy of a pumpkin? As a pumpkin expert, you will want to be certain of the answer whenever and wherever the question is posed to you.

Here is the Complete Pumpkin Anatomy:

Stem - Often referred to as the pumpkin's "Handle". Located on the very top of the pumpkin, the stem is green, when the pumpkin is still growing. As the fruit ripens, it turns brown to brownish green, and slightly curved. During the growing season, the stem is attached to the vine. It is the umbilical cord, bringing nutrients to grow the fruit. For the Fall and Halloween season, the stem gives the pumpkin "Character". Be careful not to lift a pumpkin by its "handle", as it can easily break off.



Tendril - Sometimes attached to the stem are thin, hairlike "tendrils"

During the growing season, a pumpkin's tendrils on the vine are green. They twist around fences, posts, other plants, and objects on the ground, to help anchor the vine and protect it from the wind. After harvesting, there are sometimes dried, brown tendrils on the stem. This gives the pumpkin character, and is viewed as artistic in pictures.



Leaves - The leaves of a pumpkin absorb energy from the sun for plant and fruit growth. Jack O'Lanterns for carving do not have any leaves, just a short stem. Artist's rendering of fall pumpkins often have a few small, green leaves sitting atop the fruit and attached to the stem. Pumpkin leaves are much larger than depicted in these artistic pictures. And, the stem doesn't have leaves. The vine does (further away from the stem). Once a leaf is removed from the vine, those green leaves can not remain fresh and green for long.



The Lid - Cut around the stem of your pumpkin, to open it up for carving. This becomes the "lid".

Pumpkin Shell - This refers to both the outer **skin** and the **pulp** of the fruit.

Skin - The thin, shiny, orange outer layer of a pumpkin is called the skin. It is sometimes called the "rind". It is a protective layer, which keep insects and disease out of the fruit. It is not edible. It won't make you sick if you eat it. It just doesn't taste good, or have a pleasurable texture.

Pulp - Also called "meat". This is the yummy part of the pumpkin that you use to cook with, and to make hundreds of tasty recipes and treats. You can use pumpkin in everything from main courses to desserts, ice cream and even beer! [See our cookbook for recipes.](#)



Ribs - Look at the outside of a pumpkin. There are indented ridges running from top to bottom. These are called ribs. Sometimes, they are shallow. Sometimes, they are very deep. They add depth to the appearance of the fruit, and a lot of artistic character. Which do you prefer?

Blossom End - When the fruit is very young, a flower blossom is attached to the end of the baby fruit (its bottom). This is the blossom end. The female flower is pollinated, and the fruit then develops. The flower dies, off, leaving a scar in its place. Some call this the pumpkin's belly button.

Cavity - This is the inside of a pumpkin. After removing the pumpkin guts, its just an empty cavity. It is also where the candle is placed, to light up the pumpkin and make it glow!

Brains - Okay, the proper name is fibrous strands and seeds. However, just about everyone calls them " pumpkin brains". There are many other names for this slimy, mushy, mass of strings and seeds. They include: guts, sinew, goop, goo, pumpkin slime, and just plain old "yucky stuff".

Seeds - Seeds are the beginning of next years pumpkins. Do you remember the old saying "Which came first? The pumpkin or the seed?" Pumpkin seeds are a delicious and nutritious snack. A pumpkin has hundreds of seeds.

Seed Coat - also called "seed jacket" or "seed shell". It is the outer layer of the seed. Nature provides this coat, to protect the nut or "seed germ" inside, that will eventually emerge into a pumpkin plant.

Nut - Located inside of the seed, the nut, technically called "germ" eventually develops into a new pumpkin. When a seed is planted, moisture penetrating through the seed coat, and warmth triggers the new pumpkin seedling to grow.

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