

All Things Pumpkin

Source Sheet compiled by Rabbi Shari Shamah

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The history of everything pumpkin...

Gleaned from Encyclopedia of Jewish Food, Gil Marks (p 487)

- In the Jastrow Talmudic dictionary, the word for pumpkin (or guard/squash) is *karah* (קָרָא).
- It is mentioned more than a dozen times throughout the Talmud.
- Pumpkin has been grown throughout the Americas for about 6,000 years.
- Sephardi Jews and Jew from Italy are largely credited for introducing this orange fruit into Mediterranean cooking as they began selling them in Europe in the 16th century.
- Pumpkin was cool long before Starbucks introduced Pumpkin Spice lattes... Sephardi Jews have been making soups, stews, pudding, jams, cakes, pancake and fillings out of pumpkin for centuries.
- While some in Europe considered pumpkins to be a disdainful food, for Jews who were used to using local fruits/vegetables, it helped them stretch their budget which in turn grew to normalize the use of pumpkin in cooking.
- Pumpkin delicacies are a part of many Sephardic holiday meals, especially Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, and Hanukkah.
- Popular Jewish pumpkin dishes include:
 - Syrian [Kibbet Yatkeen](#), or spicy pumpkin pancakes.
 - For Shabbat or Sukkot, Bukharian Jews (Mizrahi Jews from Central Asia like Afghanistan or Uzbekistan), might cook them in *oshe tos kadoo*, a stuffed pumpkin dish.
 - Jews from Libya use it in a pumpkin dip (*qara*), and Jews of Mumbai use pumpkin in a curried stew or in a pudding.
 - Pumpkin filled ravioli is a part of Italian Jewish cooking.
 - You can find some [recipes here](#).

Why is Pumpkin often served for Rosh Hashanah?

<i>Talmud: Horayot 12a:12</i>	תלמוד: מסכת הוריות י"ב:ב"ב
Abaye said: Now that you said that an omen is a significant matter, a person should always be accustomed to seeing these on Rosh HaShanah: Pumpkin , and fenugreek, leeks, and chard, and dates, as each of these grows quickly and serves as a positive omen for one's actions during the coming year.	אמר אבאי: השתא דאמרת סימנא מילתא היא, [לעולם] יהא רגיל למיחזי בריש שתא קרא ורוביא, פרתא וסילקא ותמרי.

- Pumpkin is said to be a good omen for the new year. The seeds represent fertility and fruitfulness.
- What does pumpkin symbolize for you?
- Did you grow up eating pumpkin for Jewish holidays?

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- If you associate pumpkin with Halloween and Thanksgiving, does it feel odd to associate it with Jewish holidays?
- What does the overlap for pumpkin between both secular and Jewish holidays say about life in America?

A farm full of Pumpkins is a Connection to God

<i>Psalm 65:11-12</i>	תהילים ס"ה:י"א-י"ב
You crown the year with Your bounty, fatness is distilled in Your paths. the pasturelands distill it, the hills are girded with joy.	עֲטַרְתָּ שָׁנָת טוֹבָתְךָ וּמִעֲגָלֶיךָ יִרְעֲפוּן דָּשָׁן: יִרְעֲפוּ נְאוֹת מְדָבָר וְגִיל גְּבֻעוֹת תִּתְחַגְרְנָה:

- A farm full of pumpkin reminds us that the abundance of fruits/ vegetables comes from God. It offers a connection and can bring us joy.
- What emotions do you feel when you see pumpkins on a farm, a farm stand, or an outdoor gardening center?
- What image do you have when you see a pumpkin on a table?

What blessing should I say over pumpkins?

<i>For produce that grows on the ground</i>		
Blessed are you God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruits of the ground.	<i>Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei, p'ri ha'adamah.</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

