

Pumpkin Carving IOI

Michael Natiello, the creative director of *Blaze*, offers some advice.

Tips for picking out a pumpkin to carve

1. When choosing your pumpkin, look for one that is without bruises, is evenly colored, and isn't moldy or rotten. Check the bottom for rot and tap gently to hear a firm, hollow sound.
2. The lighter the pumpkin's skin, the softer the pumpkin will be, thus the easier to carve. However, lighter-skinned pumpkins may not last as long post carving.
3. Choose a pumpkin with a smooth, flat face, with shallow ridges and few of them.
4. Never carry your pumpkin by the stem.

Prepping a pumpkin

1. Pick a pumpkin that best suits your intended pattern/design, or vice versa.
2. Wash and dry the pumpkin.
3. **Cut a hole in the bottom.**
4. **Scoop out the guts.**
5. Scrape the inside flesh clean and smooth until it's approximately one-inch thick.
6. **Transfer your pattern onto the chosen side or draw your pattern directly onto the pumpkin.**
7. Make cut outs.
8. Light the pumpkin and fine tune as necessary.
9. Once complete, wash under cold water.
10. Cut a vent or chimney in the back top of the pumpkin.
11. **Light and enjoy!**



The “Cut out” method

This is the traditional method of carving a pumpkin, whereby shapes are cut from the flesh, allowing light to shine through.

1. Think about your cut before you make it.
2. Start in the middle and work your way out (this helps keep the pumpkin structurally sound).
3. Leave large areas to cut out for last (same reason as above), and cut them into smaller pieces for easier removal.
4. Keep all cut edges parallel.
5. Hold cutting tool perpendicular to the surface.
6. Cut with gentle, steady sawing motions.
7. Point the cutting tool towards the pumpkin’s center.
8. Resist the urge to poke the cut out into the pumpkin. Instead, push it out towards you from the inside.
9. On corners or if changing directions, remove the carving tool then reinsert it in the new direction.
10. When complete, put a candle in the pumpkin, turn out the lights, and fine tune as needed.

Troubleshooting tips

It was dark and I thought my pumpkin was a soccer ball so I kicked it. What can I do?

To fix broken areas, or to repair areas accidentally cut off during the carving process, use toothpicks, pins, or staples to reattach. If needed, patch a broken area with a scrap of pumpkin flesh.

How do I keep my pumpkin fresh as a daisy?

To prevent shriveling or dehydration, coat all cut areas with petroleum jelly or commercially available pumpkin preservatives. Keep the pumpkin wrapped in plastic in a cool location when not in use.

I ignored your advice about the petroleum jelly. Now what?

To rehydrate a shriveled pumpkin, soak in a tub of water overnight. Dry before putting back on display. To prevent mold growth, soak in a solution of water with 10% bleach. Dry before putting back on display.

I’ve got some hungry, hungry hippos nearby. How do I prevent my pumpkins from becoming a snack?

To deter animals from eating pumpkins, spray the pumpkins with commercially available hinders, garlic spray, or hot pepper, or sprinkle the area with human hair.