



# TWO SMALL FARMS

## Community Supported Agriculture

October 1, 2, 3 2008

### Pumpkins from History, by Andy

Griffin

The small pumpkin in your box is called a "Jack Be Little." In the modern spirit, this tiny pumpkin is small enough to be placed upon a computer monitor to lend seasonal color to a cubicle, but I grew it because it tastes good. You can bake this tiny pumpkin, just like any other hard squash, and it tastes better than most "eating" pumpkins. This gourd's unfortunate name is a marketing stunt, intended to remind the consumer of the pumpkin's fabled fairy tale history. Wasn't Cinderella's magic coach the most famous pumpkin in history? Maybe, but we shouldn't forget Peter's squash.

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater  
Had a wife but couldn't keep her;  
He put her in a pumpkin shell  
And there he kept her very well.

This nursery rhyme, with its dark overtones of spousal abuse and an obscure symbolic link between pumpkins and failed romance, presents an interesting counterpoint to the Cinderella myth. For Cinderella, a pumpkin became the vehicle that carried her to marital bliss, yet for Peter's wife a pumpkin is a prison. As a pumpkin farmer, I'm unqualified to draw a psychiatrist's conclusions from these two stories, but hollowed out gourds have a long and honorable history of being used as vessels to carry water and food stuffs, so it's no surprise they should also be filled with romance, myth and contradiction.

The only pumpkin that grows large enough to hold a wandering wife is the pink shelled, yellow fleshed pumpkin from the *Cucurbita maxima* called "Atlantic Giant." The Atlantic Giant pumpkin is the kind that wins all the giant pumpkin

contests, and many specimens have weighed well over five hundred pounds. My copy of *The Real Mother Goose*, first published in 1916, has an illustration for the rhyme Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater that shows a girl, barely old enough to be Jerry Lee Lewis' wife, glaring balefully out from a huge pale pumpkin. The artist captured the fat, corky, round stem characteristic of fruits in the *Cucurbita maxima*, and the Atlantic Giant's rampant habit is authentically rendered as well.

In the past, large pumpkins like Atlantic Giant were used as cattle feed. The high carotene content that gives pumpkin flesh its typical yellow color is nutritious and gives butter that comes from cows fattened on pumpkins a pleasing yellow color. Now that the development of alfalfa bales, alfalfa cubes,

### Pumpkin Patch October 4<sup>th</sup> at High Ground Organics

High Ground Organics is hosting a pumpkin patch this Saturday, October 4th, 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. We have jack o'lantern and cinderella (French Soup) pumpkins tucked between our new apple trees overlooking Harkins Slough. Pumpkins will cost 40¢/pound. *CSA members and guests only.* For directions, please go to the website at [www.highgroundorganics.com/farmevents.html](http://www.highgroundorganics.com/farmevents.html).

Please RSVP to Shelley at [csa@twosmallfarms.com](mailto:csa@twosmallfarms.com) by Friday (or call her—831/786-0625) if you plan to come.

silage and a whole industry of enriched cattle feeds has rendered the pumpkin obsolete on the dairy farm, milk processors tint their butter with dyes where yellow colored butters are demanded by the market.

Today, even the canned "pumpkin" for pies is rarely rendered from the round, orange, hard-shelled winter squash

most people think of as pumpkins. Other squash varieties, like Butternut, that have a heavier yield, are canned instead, and pie eaters are none the wiser. Because of changing social mores the pumpkin has largely disappeared from the rural scene except as a seasonal ornamental crop or a fetish crop for obsessive gardeners anxious to prove that "bigger is better." Even the ornamental role of pumpkins as seasonal ornaments is under attack. Some merchandisers are attempting to replace the lovely, perishable jack o' lantern pumpkins with orange polyethylene bags that have black triangular shaped eyes printed on them. These convenient faux orange plastic bag "pumpkins" can be stuffed with garbage the day after Halloween and set out on the curb. They'll never rot.

Pies, no matter what they're made of, came to America from Europe, just like the Halloween tradition. I've heard horror stories over the years about homemade pumpkin pies that turned out stringy, watery, and tasteless. The idea has grown up that only some pumpkins are edible. It's true that modern breeders select for ornamental qualities as they create new cultivars for the seasonal market, but the Native Americans who first developed pumpkins as a crop ate them at all stages of their development. The thick, fat pumpkin seeds are rich in nutritious oils and some of them would have been saved to toast over the fire for a tasty meal during the long, cold winters on the east coast. Pumpkin seeds are still an essential ingredient in traditional Mexican mole sauces.

## This Week

**Jack Be Little Pumpkins** MF

**Romaine Lettuce** HG

**Tomatoes** MF

**Scallions** HG

**Mei Quin Choi** HG

**Cilantro** HG

**Red Beets** MF

**Mystery** MF

**Mystery** HG

**Flowers: Mixed Bouquet** HG,\*

Pumpkin seeds would have been sprouted too, giving people starving for fresh vegetables a bite of greenery in the late winter or early spring. After the year's crop had been planted out and the pumpkin vines began creeping across the earth, the first golden flowers could be eaten in salads followed by the little green developing fruits. The pumpkin is a close cousin to the zucchini, and its fruits were picked green and tender to be eaten raw by the Native Americans. Our English word "squash," in fact, comes to us from the Narragansett word *asquutasquash*, meaning "uncooked."

Ironically, the English word "pumpkin" comes to us from the ancient Greek word for "cooked." "Pumpkin" is an English corruption of the French word *pompion* which in Old French had been *pompon*, and earlier *popon*. The early French speakers were simply putting a Gallic twist on the Latin word *pepon* which was a cognate of a Greek word which meant cooked. It remains true of the squash that we have come to call pumpkins that to be enjoyed at their maturity they must be cooked. The Latin *pepon* survives in the botanical Latin name *Cucurbita pepo*, for one of the many sub-groups within the squash family, or *Cucurbitaceae*.

Nowadays writers use the word pumpkin imprecisely to describe hard squash that are either reminiscent of the jack o' lantern pumpkin in color or in shape. Some pumpkins, like the white Lumina pumpkins, are pumpkin shaped and pumpkin sized but come from the *Cucurbita maxima*, along with the Hubbard squash. The tan colored Long Island Cheese pumpkin belongs to *Cucurbita moschata*, along with its cousin, the butternut squash. The long and the short of it is that every pumpkin is a squash to a botanist but not every squash is a pumpkin to a chef.

**Best Baked Mini-Pumpkins**, adapted from *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini* by Elizabeth Schneider

Cut off the caps, scrape out seeds, season, re-cap, and bake. That's all it takes to give each diner a yummy little pumpkin, custom-flavored. Make sure you cook dull skinned (not shiny coating like the supermarkets do just for decoration!) As the Cinderella coaches bake, natural oils surface and they turn as glossy and bright as painted and shellacked decorations.

*For Each Serving:*

1 mini pumpkin	pinch of ground coriander, nutmeg, cinnamon, allspice, or garam masala or big pinch of dried savory, sage, or thyme, crumbled to powder
pinch salt	pinch pepper
1 tsp. butter or nut oil	1 TBS prune, apple, cranberry, or orange juice
1 tsp. maple syrup or honey	

Set oven to 350°–375°, as suits whatever else is roasting. With sturdy sharp knife, cut a square (or 5-6 sided) cap around pumpkin stem, poking into the heart of the squash to cut the fibers. Pry out the cap. With melon ball cutter or grapefruit spoon, scoop out and scrape interior to remove all seeds and fibers. Trim fibers from cap. Sprinkle spice (or herbs), salt, and pepper inside and tap to distribute. Add butter, juice, and sweetening. Set cap back in opening, but do not press in fully (or it may slip inside). Place in baking dish. Bake until creamy-soft inside, about 30 minutes for small squash, 45 minutes for larger ones. Test with knife tip—it should slide through easily. Let stand 15–60 minutes, as convenient.

**Tomato Abundance Day in Palo Alto,**

**Saturday, October 11th, 10 a.m.–12 noon**

Mariquita will sell boxes of tomatoes at one of our pick up sites in Palo Alto (address given when order is made). Please e-mail your orders to [mariquitamystery@gmail.com](mailto:mariquitamystery@gmail.com) before Thursday, Oct. 9th at 9am. The tomatoes will be paid for in cash at the time of pick up, no advance payment necessary.

*San Marzanos:* 20#/\$28; *Early Girl:* 20#/\$28; *Heirloom:* 10#/\$20. This event/sale is open to anyone anywhere.

**Beets with Yogurt from Arabesque**, adapted from *Claudia Roden*, Serves 6–8 appetizers (submitted by Natalie S.)

1 bunch beets, greens removed	1 garlic clove, crushed, opt.
1 cup Greek yogurt	1 tbsp. lemon juice
3 tbsp. olive oil	salt
handful of chopped mint or parsley	

Cut the stems and leaves about ¾ in. above the beets. Either boil the beets (30 minutes in boiling salted water) or roast the beets (wrapped in foil in a 400° oven for 2–3 hours) until tender. When cool enough to handle, peel and cut the beets into less than ½ inch-thick slices.

Beat the crushed garlic, if using, into the yogurt and spread the mixture on a serving plate. Arrange the beet slices on top. Beat the lemon juice with the oil and a little salt and stir in the chopped mint or parsley. Spoon over the beet slices and serve.

**Mei Quin Choy with Red Curry Sauce**, from [taste.com.au](http://taste.com.au), submitted by [janespice.com](http://janespice.com)

Some say the taste of mei quin choy is a cross between a cabbage and lettuce, but is much more delicate, and is best steamed or cooked as its bitter if eaten raw. This recipe combines two cultures, Asian and Indian, to create a very unique dish. Despite the delicacy of bok choy, the red curry flavor doesn't overpower the dish. The roasted peanuts add a delightful crunch with every bite.

1 tsp. vegetable or peanut oil	1 tsp. red curry paste
¼ cup coconut milk	1 tsp. brown sugar
1 ½ tsp. fish sauce	½ lime, juiced
2 bunches mei quin choy or baby bok choy, trimmed	2 tablespoons roasted peanuts, chopped

Heat oil in a wok over med.-high heat. Add curry paste. Stir-fry for 30 seconds or until aromatic. Slowly pour in coconut milk, stirring constantly. Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 3 minutes. Add sugar, fish sauce and 2 tsp. lime juice. Stir to combine.

Wash and drain bok choy. Cut bok choy into quarters lengthways (if small, cut in half). Line base of a steamer basket with baking paper. Place bok choy in basket. Steam, covered, over boiling water (do not allow steamer base to touch water) for 2–3 minutes or until thickest part of stems are tender (see shortcut). Transfer to a plate.

Pour curry sauce over bok choy and sprinkle with peanuts. *Shortcut:* Place washed bok choy, with water clinging, in a plastic bag. Twist top to seal. Microwave on High (100%) for 2–3 minutes or until tender. Drain.

*Everything in your box and the flowers are organically grown. From Mariquita Farm: tomatoes, beets, pumpkins, mystery. From High Ground: lettuce, scallions, mei quin choy, cilantro, mystery, flowers. From Thomas Farm: some flowers.*