

Pumpkin Seed Harvest and Roast

Materials Needed:

- Pumpkins
- Cutting board
- Serrated carving knife
- Strainer
- Kitchen towel
- Non-stick Cookie sheet
- Plastic covering for desks unless done outside

Use the serrated carving knife to cut open the pumpkin. Carve open only the top of the pumpkin if it will be used for decoration. Slice the pumpkin in half if it will be used solely for cooking purposes.

Scoop out the pumpkin seeds using clean hands, and deposit them onto the cutting board. Pull the seeds away from the stringy pumpkin pulp. Deposit the seeds into a strainer with small circular holes.

Discard the unnecessary pumpkin pulp in the trash bin. Place the strainer with the seeds into the sink underneath the faucet. Rinse the seeds clean with warm water and remove all of the remaining pumpkin pulp and slime.

Lay the kitchen towel flat upon the counter. Pour the cleaned seeds from the strainer onto the towel. Use the towel to dab off all of the excess water on the seeds. Transfer the seeds from the towel onto the non-stick cookie sheet.

Spread the seeds into a single layer on the cookie sheet and allow to dry for 24 hours. Use the seeds in the garden, save them for planting next season or roast them for a tasty high-protein snack.

Roasting the Pumpkin Seeds:

Note: Soaking the seeds in salt water is optional. The salt water deactivates enzyme inhibitors in the seeds; those enzyme inhibitors can irritate your stomach, and removing them allows the production of more vitamins in the seeds. Many traditional groups like the Aztecs soak pumpkin/squash seeds in salt water before dehydrating them. Many people also find that doing this dramatically improves the flavor of the seeds.

Fill a large bowl about 2/3 with water.

Add salt to the water until it is saturated.

Place seeds in the salt-water solution and let soak for 8 to 48 hours.

Dump all of the water out of the bowl.

Dry the seeds with paper towels.

Season the seeds. This is where you can get creative.

Here are some ideas:

- Sprinkle with additional salt.
- Toss every cup of seeds with 1 tbsp of vegetable, olive or canola oil until the seeds are coated; it will help additional seasonings stick.
- Season with old bay/crab seasoning, chili powder, Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder, Cajun seasoning, and/or other strong flavors for a savory snack.
- Season with sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg for a sweet snack.

Spread the seeds on a cookie sheet. Roast the Seeds. There are several ways to do this:

- **Broil** - Preheat your oven to the "Broil" setting, so only the top element is activated. Place the sheet into the preheated oven. Watch carefully, as different ovens broil at a variety of temperatures. This should usually take no more than 10 minutes. When the top of the seeds has turned brown, you can do one of two things based on your texture preferences: (a) Remove the pan now for a slightly crispy and nutty texture, or (b) remove the pan and flip the seeds over. Replace back in the oven and toast another 10 minutes, or until brown. This yields a very crispy and salty seed.
- **Bake** - Preheat the oven to 150° C or 300° F and leave the pumpkin seeds in there until browned (45 - 55 minutes), shaking them around every 5-10 minutes to prevent burning.
- **Microwave** - Put the seeds in the microwave for 2 minutes. Take them out, stir, and put them back in for 1 minute. Keep stirring them after every minute in the microwave until they're crispy enough.
- **Pan** - Roast them in a pan, constantly shifting them around so that they roast evenly and don't stick to the pan.