

PUMPKIN AND GOURD FACTS

- Pumpkins originated in and are native to North America.
- Native Americans relied on the pumpkin as an important and regular part of their diet. Many people in Mexico, Central and South America still have pumpkin in their diet and benefit from the good nutrition it provides (high in Beta Carotene and Vitamins A & C)
- Colonists are said to have originated the pumpkin pie recipe.
- Pumpkins come in many shapes, sizes and colors.
- Pumpkins can weigh anywhere from a few ounces to several hundred pounds.
- Pumpkins come in several colors, including: white, pink, red but are mostly orange.
- Pumpkins love the sun and need at least 6 hours of it daily.
- At Carrigan Farms, pumpkins are typically planted from late June thru early July.
- In the summer, pumpkins seeds will grow into a plant with a flowering bloom. Bees are needed to pollinate the pumpkin flowers, thus, prompting the development of a baby pumpkin. (Sun and rain are also needed for proper growth.)
- In early fall, days and nights become cooler. Like changing leaves, the pumpkins will change from a green color to an orangey one.
- Pumpkins are ready for harvesting (picking off the vine) when they have fully transformed their colors.
- Gourds are in the same family as pumpkins, melons, squash and cucumbers.
- Gourds are typically not edible.
- Ancient ancestors used gourds for bowls, spoons and storage containers.
- Today, gourds are used as decoration, music makers, bird houses and more.

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Scientists have discovered seeds from pumpkin-related plants dating back to nearly 9,000 B.C.*
- *Christopher Columbus carried pumpkin seeds back to Europe on his return trips.*
- *Although many believe it to be a vegetable, a pumpkin is actually a fruit.*

PUMPKINS AND HALLOWEEN

The tradition of Halloween dates back over 3,000 years to Celtic ancestors. The end of summer was a time when the dead were thought to be closest to the earthly world. Gourds were hollowed out and burning ash lay in them to welcome deceased loved ones (this was an early version of the Jack-O-Lantern). When Irish settlers journeyed to the New World, the pumpkin became a favored Jack-O-Lantern source due to its larger size.

The great potato famine that took place in Ireland in the late 19th century encouraged large numbers of Irish to immigrate to America. Borrowing from Irish traditions, Americans began to dress in costumes and travel to houses in search of food and money (an early version of trick-or-treating). In the early 1900's, the Halloween tradition became more about neighborhood parties, including children as well. Around 1950, our modern version of "trick-or-treating" was created, where children would dress in costumes and visit from house to house in search of candies.