

## Roast pumpkin with mushroom-and-bread stuffing

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This roast pumpkin with a mushroom-and-bread stuffing makes a beautiful vegetarian entrée.

Use a small [pumpkin](#) if you can find one, but kabocha (Japanese pumpkin) or butternut also works. For a special garnish, save the seeds from the pumpkin, toss them with spices and roast them. If you use a kobocho or butternut, opt for store-bought pepitas; these pumpkin seeds are too woody to eat.

### Ingredients (serves 6)

- 1 (2 kg) pumpkin
- 6 cups whole-wheat bread, torn into pieces
- 1 tbsp grapeseed oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 50 g button mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped
- 2 tsp chopped fresh thyme or 1 tsp, dried
- 1 tsp chopped fresh sage or 1/2 tsp dried
- Pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup low-fat milk

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- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### Spiced Pumpkin Seed Garnish

- 1 cup raw pumpkin seeds or pepitas
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp fennel seed
- 1/4 tsp crushed red pepper
- Salt and pepper

### Method

To prepare stuffed pumpkin: Place rack in centre of oven; preheat to 180°C. Line a rimmed baking sheet with baking paper.

Using a sharp knife and working at a slight angle, cut a 15 cm cap off the top of the pumpkin. Using a metal spoon, remove the seeds and strings from the cap and the inside. (If preparing Spiced Pumpkin Seed garnish, reserve the seeds.) Season the inside with salt and pepper. Place the pumpkin (or squash) on the prepared baking sheet.

Place bread in a bowl. Heat one tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and celery. Cook, stirring, until just beginning to brown, three to five minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-low, add mushrooms, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are tender, six to eight minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 45 seconds. Transfer the vegetables to the bowl with the bread. Stir in thyme, sage and cayenne pepper. Add eggs, milk and cheese and stir to combine. Fill the pumpkin with the mixture, pushing it down if necessary so it fits inside. (If you have extra stuffing, place it in a small baking dish, cover with foil and bake during the last hour that the pumpkin roasts.) Replace the cap on top.

Bake for 1 1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, if preparing Spiced Pumpkin Seed Garnish: Line a rimmed baking sheet with a nonstick baking mat or baking paper. Rinse the reserved pumpkins seeds to remove any flesh or strings. Dry them on a clean dish towel. Toss in a small bowl with one teaspoon oil, fennel seed, crushed red pepper and salt and pepper. Spread out on the prepared baking sheet. Roast at 180°C until golden brown, about 20 minutes.

After the pumpkin has baked for 1 1/2 hours, remove the cap and use a spoon to fluff up the stuffing so it comes up higher than the top of the pumpkin. Return to the oven (without the cap) and continue baking until it is tender enough to be pierced easily with the tip of a knife (check in several spots to be sure it's done) and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the centre of the stuffing registers at least 70°C, 30 to 45 minutes more. Let rest for 10 minutes. Carefully transfer to a warmed serving plate. Garnish with Spiced Pumpkin Seeds, if desired.

Recipe by Shannon Dunn

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