



## **What's Jewish About Pumpkins?**

At this time of year, pumpkins are everywhere. Coffee shops and grocery stores feature endless products from pumpkin-spiced latte to pumpkin-infused tortilla chips, jack-o-lanterns are found on many doorsteps, and magazines are filled with ideas for decorating tables and mantelpieces with this fall fruit.

Here are a number of ways to see pumpkins through a Jewish lens:

### **Pumpkins in Jewish Text**

Though pumpkins are not mentioned in the Torah specifically, they appear a handful of times in the Mishnah and the Talmud, letting us know that they have been part of our cultural conscience for at least 2000 years.

#### **A few Jewish proverbs:**

Talmud, Tractate Sukkah 56b

Abaye said: "A young pumpkin (in hand) is better than a full grown one (in the field)."

Talmud, Tractate Berachot 48a

Rabbah said to [Abaye and Rava], "To whom do we bless [i.e. say Grace After Meals]?" They replied, "The All-merciful." "And where does the All-merciful dwell?" Rava pointed upwards to the ceiling; Abaye went outside and pointed towards the heavens. Rabbah said to them, "Both of you are Rabbis; for that is what the proverb says, 'Every pumpkin is known by its stem.'"

#### **And a few Jewish laws that use the gourd as examples:**

Talmud, Tractate Berachot 38b (about which blessing to say over cooked vs. raw food)

It is quite right that food which in its original state requires [the blessing] "...By Whose word all things exist"; if cooked requires [the blessing] "...Who createst the fruit of the ground"; for it is found thus in the instances of cabbage, beet and the pumpkin.

Mishnah Shabbat 17:6 (about actions which are permissible on Shabbat)

(If) a stone [sits] in a pumpkin one may draw water with it [the pumpkin] if the stone does not fall out, but one may not draw water with it [if the stone] does [fall out]. [If] a vine-branch is tied to a pitcher, water may be drawn with it on Shabbat.

### **Growing Pumpkins in Israel**

We think of Israel as the Land of Milk and Honey, and possibly olives, dates, and figs. Following are a few articles about Israeli pumpkin farmers:

Giant Gourds Tip Scale at 40 Kilos

<http://www.israel21c.org/giant-gourds-tip-scale-at-40-kilos/>

A Pumpkin Patch on the Moshav

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/a-pumpkin-patch-on-the-moshav/>

Qassam Effect? Farmers Showcase Huge Pumpkins

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4098994,00.html>

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### The Great Pumpkin Shabbat

#### Shabbat Candle Holders

Purchase miniature pumpkins, cut off the top, hollow out the middle and line with foil. Place tea light in the center for instant Shabbat candles. You can also simply cut a hole around the stem, hollow that section out and place a standard Shabbat candle covered in foil in the center.

#### Pumpkin Challah

Use this pumpkin challah recipe with your class:

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/recipe/pumpkin-challah/>. You can also decorate a challah with pumpkin seeds or shape a challah into the form of a pumpkin complete with stem.

#### Spice Up your Havdalah

Instead of the standard Havdalah spice, celebrate Havdalah with pumpkin pie spice. You can buy a pre-made blend in the baking aisle of your grocery store or make your own pumpkin spice with cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, and cloves to put in your *besamim* (spice) jar. If you don't have wine or grape juice on hand, it is halakhically permissible to make Havdalah over any beverage you would serve a guest. Pumpkin spice chai tea, perhaps?

### Pumpkins in Sephardic Cooking

Pumpkins are featured in many Sephardic recipes. It is tradition, among Sephardic Jews, to eat something containing pumpkin for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Think about using these as part of a cooking class, a Sephardic-themed Shabbat dinner, or as part of a unit on world Jewry.

#### Pan De Calabaza -Pumpkin Bread

<http://forward.com/articles/143442/pan-de-calabaza/>

#### Sephardic Pumpkin Turnovers

<http://www.food.com/recipe/empanadas-de-calabasa-sefardicas-sephardic-pumpkin-turnovers-135695>

#### Pumpkin Cake

<http://www.sbhseattle.org/resources/sephardic-recipes/#PumpkinCake>

#### Pumpkin Soup with Fideos -Toasted Noodles

<http://www.foodandwine.com/recipes/pumpkin-soup-with-fideos>