

DIY: CARVING THE PERFECT PUMPKIN

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It's that time of year again—time to begin designing that unique costume, to buy bag upon bag of miniature candy bars and candy corn, and to dust off those scary music CDs that only get played once a year. That's right, Halloween is just around the corner, and nothing says Halloween like a particularly frightening jack o' lantern. Here's how to make one that will scare the sheet off any ghost.

Materials:

- one medium-large sized pumpkin, depending on preference
- one sharp, serrated knife
- one paring knife
- one large spoon for scooping
- one thumb tack or needle
- one bottle of olive oil

Directions:

- 1) Start by choosing a pumpkin from the local grocery store. Look for a pumpkin that has a ripe orange color and does not have any scratches or bruises. Make sure the fruit has a nice stem that can be used as a lid handle.
- 2) Next, think about the type of design that would look nice on the porch or in the front window, one that will scare off the trick-or-treaters so that you can have more candy for yourself! The traditional, grinning jack-o'-lantern is never a bad choice, but designs ranging from a haunted house to several winged bats can be drawn out at home or found online.
- 3) Now that you have a design in mind, draw or download a stencil on an oval-shaped sheet of paper that will fit on the pumpkin. Using the stencil, draw the design on the face of the pumpkin.
- 4) Begin the carving process by laying out old newspaper to simplify cleanup. Make sure it's not this article!
- 5) Tape the stencil onto the pumpkin and use the thumbtack or needle to poke holes through the paper and into the pumpkin, following the design.
- 6) Carve out a lid by using the serrated knife to cut a zigzag circle around the top about two inches away from the stem.
- 7) Now, scoop out the all of the pumpkin's brains! (You can later separate the seeds from the flesh, place them on a baking sheet, sprinkle a little salt on them and roast them in the oven until they are golden brown.) Scrape the sides of the pumpkin smooth until the sides are about one inch thick.
- 8) Finally, use the paring knife to carve along the dotted lines that were previously prepared. To have the pumpkin look its best for the longest time possible, dry the inside and the cuts, then rub them with a thin layer of olive oil to prevent dehydration.
- 9) Cut open a small hole on the top to allow the heat to vent from the candle or else the pumpkin might have a meltdown!
- 10) Place a candle inside the pumpkin and light it, but do not ever leave a lit candle alone. Alternatives to a candle can include a small flash light, or even a glow stick.

