

## The Way of the BLT

Once you try this technique, you may never make a sandwich the same way again.

See B2



## A Family-Friendly Weeknight Dinner for the Season

These simple pork chops are elevated with an autumnal apple cider glaze.

See B5

## FOOD

THE EPOCH TIMES



Pumpkins are a culinary powerhouse—as long as you use the kinds bred for eating, not for carving.

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FROM MY POINT OF VIEW/ SHUTTERSTOCK



These Polish-style cabbage rolls call for softened cabbage leaves wrapped around a grain and meat filling, simmered for hours in a tomato-based sauce.

## Golabki, 2 Ways: Traditional and ‘Cheaters’

However you make them—in 3 hours or 30 minutes—these Polish stuffed cabbage rolls are classic comfort food

KEVIN REVOLINSKI

Roll out the special characters for another great Polish dish: *gołąbki*. You will hear it as *go-LAHB-kee*, but in Polish, that unusual (for us) “l” makes the word sound like *ga-WOMP-kee*.

## Our family prefers sauerkraut to the tomato.

While the literal translation means “little doves,” these are stuffed cabbage rolls (the size of little doves, but likely better tasting!). As I wrote in a previous article about Czech *kolache*, in Texas, a nontraditional sausage-filled “*kolache*” is what many Americans could call a “pig in a blanket.” In northern Wisconsin, a pig in a blanket is one of these cabbage rolls. If I asked my Slovak grandmother, she’d tell me they are *halupki*. Hey, to each their own! (I may take to calling these Polish *enchiladas*.)

Making *gołąbki* requires a bit of work and time, so families often make them around the holidays or for special gatherings. But most Polish restaurants here in the United States or typical cafeterias in Poland will have them on the menu. This is hearty food, and I tend to get a hankering for it in the colder months. My grandparents used to make them, and I learned from my mother.

The Polish-style cabbage roll calls for softened cabbage leaves wrapped around a grain and meat filling, simmered for hours in a tomato-based sauce. Our family prefers sauerkraut to the tomato.

Tomatoes are New World food, so while cabbage rolls may date farther back, the recipes we see today are no older than the arrival and dispersion of those foods through workaday populations of Europe. Recipes can vary, and I include notes for some variations in this one.

Nowadays, Mom is cooking for just herself and my father, and forgoes the extra work with a shortcut version: “We [call] it ‘cheaters’ because we’re cheating.” Rather than cooking the rolls for 3 to 4 hours, she arrives at all the flavor of *golabki* without all the work and time.

Continued on B2



► Heirloom pumpkins come in all sizes, shapes, and colors—some as beautiful as they are delicious.



# Pumpkins to Cook, Not Carve

Far beyond seasonal decor, these pumpkin varieties have endless potential in the kitchen

ERIC LUCAS

Consider the lowly, unappreciated pumpkin. Sarah Frey does this a lot.

“Pumpkins bring me joy. It’s my happy crop,” declared the largest grower and shipper of pumpkins in the United States. Owner of Frey Farms, based in southern Illinois, Frey is responsible for the arrival each autumn of 5 million pumpkins (yes, 5 million) at grocery stores and other retail outlets across America. Her company grows these millions on about 3,000 acres,

and contracts for production of 1 million more.

That’s a lot of pumpkins. The big, orange, snaggle-tooth sculpted Jack ‘o’ lantern (they’re called “jacks” in the produce trade) is one of our most familiar agricultural icons (and makes up 75 percent of Frey’s pumpkin production). And appreciative cooks like me consider pumpkins a horticultural marvel—sensational savory ingredients packed in a nature-made storage device that lasts long into winter, both powerfully preservative and beautifully decorative. Can’t say that for ziplock bags.

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# Pumpkins to Cook, Not Carve

Far beyond seasonal decor, these pumpkin varieties have endless potential in the kitchen

Continued from B1

So why would I call pumpkins unappreciated underdogs?

Easy. The vast majority of Americans value whole pumpkins for decorative purposes only. If you say the word “pumpkin,” most think of massive piles of massive orange jacks in supermarket parking lots ... or of pumpkin spice lattes, Starbucks’ insanely popular contribution to pumpkin iconography, which has very little actual pumpkin in it and originally had absolutely none. A much smaller but fervently devoted group values pumpkins only in terms of the ubiquitous giant-pumpkin contests that bring fame and fortune to the grower of the most bizarrely Brobdingnagian (and practically useless) pumpkin each fall.

Frey, who had an established business producing melons, began growing pumpkins as a new cash crop, but her natural curiosity and adventurous nature led her to try many different kinds from the start. “I became obsessed with all the different varieties of pumpkin—the sizes, the shapes, the colors,” she writes in her new memoir, “The Growing Season.” “It seemed as though we were missing out in America by just carving them up once a year and tossing them out to the squirrels.”

Pumpkins are in fact a culinary powerhouse—as long as you use the kinds bred for eating, not for carving.

## Picking a Pumpkin

I have long grown two pumpkins that I cure and store for winter use. Fairytale, a French heirloom variety, are large, chocolate-brown beauties whose intense persimmon-colored flesh not only makes marvelous pies, but is also perfect added to winter stews in chunks as a cold-season quasi-zucchini ingredient. I also have a smaller, kabocha-type fruit I developed myself that is perfect for a mid-winter dinner—halved, roasted, and served alone with ample daubs of butter. They are vivid orange-red orbs that keep for months on the dining room table.

“My favorite types of pumpkins are those that look great and taste great,” said pumpkin advocate Mary Jane Duford, a culinary gardening writer based in British Columbia. “That way, I can use them in my fall decor before cooking them up in a fall dish (we love pumpkin bread in our household).”

“Jarrahdale pumpkins are a beautiful option with a blue rind and a smooth, refreshing taste. Kabocha pumpkins are beautiful, dark green Japanese pumpkins with a bright orange interior and earthy, autumnal taste. Marina di Chioggia is a warty Italian heirloom with deep orange, sweet flesh.” She’s also a fan of the Fairytale, for its “almost antique patina” and “sweet and subtle flavor.”

**Talk to a grower at a farmers market, a local CSA farm, or a knowledgeable buyer at a quality grocery store. If they don’t know the answer, Sarah Frey believes that they should.**

COURTESY OF LORI ANN DAVID



Farmer Lori Ann David is partial to Sugar Pie pumpkins for cooking: “You can’t beat the flavor.” The enormous jacks behind her, while edible, are best suited for decorating.

*Eric Lucas is a retired associate editor at Alaska Beyond Magazine and lives on a small farm on a remote island north of Seattle, where he grows organic hay, beans, apples, and squash.*

MAGDANATKA/SHUTTERSTOCK



ANGELA TALLEY

Sarah Frey’s list of culinary pumpkin cultivars is similar to Duford’s: Cinderella (Rouge Vif d’Etampes), Jarrahdale, Long Island Cheese, Fairytale (Musquée de Provence), Dickinson, and Peanut (Galeux d’Eysines), the latter a knobby French variety with a hazy orange exterior color. Which is her favorite? “Oh, that’s like asking me to pick a favorite child.” (She has two sons.)

## What to Cook

All these varieties are derived from the New World squashes that were part of indigenous America’s “three sisters” of corn, beans, and squash, and which have been adapted into different types and different cuisines in every corner of the globe.

Hector Toyos, chef at The Monocle restaurant in Washington, D.C., recalled that during his formative years training in French cuisine, pumpkin was popular for soups, stews, purees, and many other non-dessert uses. For a recent harvest dinner, Toyos served lightly braised scallops atop a pumpkin puree, a dish seasoned only with garlic, shallots, cayenne, and salt and pepper—“simple, but really good.”

Kerrie Roetcisoender, owner of Muddy Boots Pumpkin farm in the Snoqualmie Valley east of Seattle, added culinary varieties to her fields after customer requests—and began discovering in her own household the many culinary uses of the new varieties. Her favorite is Blue Doll, which her husband likes to halve, partially roast, fill with beef stew, and roast some more.

“It’s beyond delicious,” Roetcisoender raved.

But there is one culinary variety that seems most popular by far in the United States, one that most stores, markets, and growers would have on hand. It’s also the one called out in most start-from-scratch pumpkin pie recipes.

“What you want, sweetie-pie, is Sugar Pie.” My local CSA farmer, Lori Ann David, hoisted a medium-size light orange pumpkin, sporting streaks of green, and grinned. “It’s my go-to for cooking. You can’t beat the flavor. The other night I made a pumpkin curry soup that—oh my.”

David’s advice illustrates the best way to find a good culinary pumpkin: Talk to a grower at a farmers market, a local CSA farm, or a knowledgeable buyer at a quality grocery store. If they don’t know the answer, Sarah Frey believes that they should.

“Pumpkins are incredible vessels for food and flavor,” argued Frey, who has adopted a role as national pumpkin advocate—“America’s Pumpkin Queen,” The New York Times labeled her.

“People get happy over pumpkins,” she continued. “If that’s mostly because of Jack o’lanterns, it’s because we haven’t done a good enough job of educating consumers. And that’s up to people like me.”

So go ahead, ask your grocer for a Jarrahdale, or a Blue Doll, or a Peanut pumpkin. Make it into curry soup, or lamb stew, or even just a midwinter side dish, and let’s squash pumpkin ignorance this season.

Sarah Frey sits on a bed of Frey Farms heirloom pumpkins.



Simply roasted pumpkin makes a beautiful fall or winter dish.

## LORI ANN DAVID’S PUMPKIN CURRY SOUP

SERVES 6

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- 4 pounds sugar pumpkin (also called pie pumpkin), peeled and cubed (about 10 cups)
- 4 cups vegetable broth, or more for a thinner soup (substitute beef or chicken bone broth for a richer version)
- 2 tablespoons curry powder or Thai red curry paste—taste, or more or less to taste
- 1 14-ounce can full-fat coconut milk
- 1/4 cup fresh squeezed lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add the onions and sauté until translucent, stirring often.

Add the minced garlic and grated ginger and sauté for another 2 to 3 minutes, until the onions begin to brown.

Add the diced pumpkin and stir to combine. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring once or twice more.

Slowly add the broth, until it just covers the pumpkin. Add more



EVGENIA ELISEVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sugar Pie pumpkins are perfect for cooking into a creamy, savory-sweet soup.

or less for desired consistency. Slowly stir in some of the curry paste or powder. Taste, then add more or less for the flavor and heat you like.

Bring the soup to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat, and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, until the pumpkin is fork-tender.

Remove from the heat and purée until smooth with an immersion blender. Stir in the coconut milk and lemon juice.

Taste the soup and adjust seasonings as desired.

Serve with toasted pumpkin seeds (pepitas), hazelnuts, and/or cashews. The soup is extra yummy with a dollop of creme fraiche or sour cream on top.

Courtesy of Lori Ann David, adapted from Hey Nutrition Lady



JIANG HONGYAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Kabocha squash, also sometimes called Japanese pumpkins, have dark green skin and bright orange insides with an earthy flavor.



VEZZANI PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sugar pumpkins, also called pie pumpkins, are the most popular variety for cooking in the United States.



COURTESY OF KERRIE ROETCISOENDER

The Blue Doll pumpkin is farmer Kerrie Roetcisoender’s favorite.



ZIGZAG MOUNTAIN ART/SHUTTERSTOCK

Jarrahdale pumpkins have a blue rind and a smooth, refreshing taste.



ALEXANDER RATHS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Jack-o-lantern pumpkins are edible, but given their watery, stringy, mild-tasting flesh, they’re better suited for carving.



JULI SCALZI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Fairytale pumpkins, a French heirloom variety, have a dusky-tan rind and sweet, subtle flavor.

