



# Culinary Corner

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## FEATURE



Bobby Cochran/CW photos

Set the mood for a spirited holiday with a big batch of buttery cinnamon ghost toast for a Halloween morning treat.

served raw, either grated into salads or thinly sliced and served with raw veggies and your favorite dip. Cubes of raw pumpkin may be batter-dipped and deep-fried for a wonderful vegetarian appetizer. And shredded raw pumpkin is great when added to almost any batter bread or carrot cake recipe. This time of year, a puree of pumpkin blended with chicken or vegetable stock and seasonings makes great soup. For a special treat at your Halloween or Thanksgiving holiday table, hollow out small pie pumpkins and use them as soup bowls.

Buy several pumpkins from a local pumpkin patch or grocery store – a couple to carve and a couple more to cut up, cook and eat.

Look for medium to slightly smaller pumpkins, those with more tender and succulent flesh, when you are cooking as opposed to carving. Like any other winter squash – butternut, acorn, golden and Hubbard – the skin should be free of blemishes and the squash should be heavy for its size. Store whole winter squash at room temperature for as long as a month or keep in a cooler place for as long as three months.

When it's time to cook, the easiest way to crack the pumpkin's tough outer shell is to put it in a large heavy-duty plastic garbage bag, take it outside and drop it on some concrete. The pumpkin will split open into several pieces. Remove the pumpkin pieces from the bag, scoop out the stringy pulp that surrounds the seeds, and then cut the firmer pulp from the shell. Boil, steam, bake or fry the chunks of pumpkin as you would potatoes; or place the pumpkin chunks, skin and all, cut side up in a large roasting pan. Add 2 cups of water or broth to the pan, cover tightly with foil and place in a preheated 375-degree oven for about an hour or until the pumpkin pieces are fork tender. Remove the squash from the liquid in the pan, cool, and then scoop the pulp from the rind. For pumpkin puree, mash or process the boiled or steamed chunks in a processor or blender or by hand. Season and use

## Keen on Halloween cuisine

For boys and ghouls of all ages

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Halloween is a holiday for those with a flair for the dramatic. On Tuesday, Oct. 31, give your home's front entrance a "spooktacular" new look by replacing decorative flowerpots with glowing jack-o'-lanterns and cauldrons filled with dry ice. Early in the evening, add a little water to the dry ice to create a smoky or foggy effect. Handle the dry ice with heavy-duty gloves to prevent an ice burn, and be sure to cover the top with mesh screening to keep out little hands or curious pets. For even more holiday drama, drape the smoking cauldrons with stretchy spiderweb material. Large rubber spiders hung from porch lights with a length of monofilament will help set the stage. Once you've created the right first impression, your treats will need to follow suit.

### Tricks and treats

Run-of-the-mill candy favorites to hand out are easy to find. Packages of fun-sized candy bars have been on store shelves since before Labor Day. To try something different this year, make a quick trip to Jackson's Emporium in downtown Waxhaw. Located at 107 S. West Main St. and open seven days a week, the store offers a vast variety of the candies of yesteryear in addition to all the trendy treats of today. The selection includes a host of sour candies, several seasonal goodies like jellied eyeballs and candy fingers, and a ghoulish line of crunchy seasoned insects. For more infor-

mation on Jackson's, call 704-843-2722.

If tastes run to the soft and sweet rather than to the creepy and crunchy, head over to Krispy Kreme, where classic yeast-raised doughnuts are shaped like pumpkins this month. The dough, cut into pumpkin shapes, coated with creamy orange icing and stamped with a jack-o'-lantern face, will be available at participating stores through Oct. 31. To find a Krispy Kreme retail location, visit [www.krispykreme.com](http://www.krispykreme.com).

Handmake treats by using a standard Rice Krispies treats recipe and folding in orange and black M&Ms. Make crunchy nut brittle with homemade toasted pumpkin seeds. Or bake a batch of sugar cookies decorated with orange sugar and chocolate sprinkles. Treat the family to ghost toast for breakfast Halloween morning by following this week's recipe.

### Awash in squash

Caught up in the Halloween spirit, most of us select real pumpkins for our jack-o'-lanterns. But when it comes to actually cooking this seasonal squash, we forget about the possibilities. Fresh pumpkin, like all other varieties of winter squash, is abundant. Pumpkin may be



Use small pie pumpkins as soup bowls for your Halloween or Thanksgiving table.

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Photo courtesy of Krispy Kreme

Krispy Kreme doughnuts are all dressed up for Halloween.

as directed in your favorite recipe. Cooked pumpkin pulp will keep in your freezer for six to eight months.

In addition to being used as a base for many sweet and savory recipes, pumpkin or winter squash puree may also be served on its own as you would mashed or creamed potatoes. Simply add a little butter to the puree and season to taste with salt and pepper.

The pumpkin seeds, or pepitas, may be rinsed and then dried, seasoned and

baked. Spread the dry pumpkin seeds in a single layer on a lightly oiled or buttered baking sheet. Season them generously before baking with something as simple as a mixture of table salt and pepper, or go for a zestier blend of garlic salt, chili powder and a dash of cumin. Toast the seeds in a preheated 200-degree oven for 45 minutes to one hour, turning them over halfway during the baking time. When the seeds are toasted, remove them from the oven and allow them to cool to room temperature. Store in an airtight container. For a special Halloween treat, use them in your favorite nut brittle recipe in place of or in combination with salted peanuts, cashews or hazelnuts.

## Ghost Toast

For each slice of toast, spread soft butter or margarine on a large slice of white bread. Carefully cut or tear a ghostlike shape out of aluminum foil – don't forget to cut out the eyes. Press the foil shape on top of the buttered bread. Liberally sprinkle the bread with a mixture of cinnamon and sugar.

Put the coated slices on a baking sheet and place under a preheated broiler for two to three minutes or until the butter is hot and bubbly. Remove the foil template to reveal a ghost on your toast. □

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# Charge on for chili

Booster club inaugural cook-off deemed a spicy success

by Heidi Billotto  
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This past Friday night's Concession Crawl (see page 54) found me at Providence Day School. Pregame festivities included a chili cook-off sponsored by the Charger Club, PDS's booster club. Each of the seven fall sports teams had a chili entry, as did the school's athletic director, Barbara Fricke. Individual chili recipes were prepared by team parents in advance and served the night of the cook-off by team members. Each team was provided a tent and signage, which they were able to decorate to suit their individual brand of chili. Varieties ran the gamut from a slightly sweet vegetarian chili to a spicy sausage chili to a ground beef chili served over linguini.

I was one of eight judges who tasted the chili entries, not knowing which chili was whose, and rated them based on taste and texture.

While we were judging, the crowd tasted as well, sampling bowls of chili and voting for their favorite for \$1 per vote. After the judges' ballots were tallied, the results found first-, second- and third-place winners to be close competitors. The judges chose the varsity football team's Texas-style 50-Yard Line Chili as the winner. Second place went to the cross country team for its Kick Up Your Heels Chili and third place went to the volleyball team for a chili with a Cuban kick called Jump Jivin' Havana Chili.

Top honors in the people's choice award went to Fricken's Private Stock Chili, served topped with corn chips; second place went to 50-Yard Line Chili and third place to Kick Up Your Heels Chili.

Organizers estimate the event drew more than 400 participants who tasted approximately 1,800 bowls of chili. The cook-off raised \$3,200.

Varsity football mom Bonnie Downen prepared the winning recipe. Her son, Scott, is the team's receiver. Downen's recipe makes one gallon of chili and is perfect cold-weather tailgate fare.



Bonnie Downen mans the varsity football team's 50-Yard Line Chili booth with a trio of PDS football fans (from left): 10th-grader Olivia Hunter, football mom Bonnie Downen, PDS alum Meredith Downen and fan Anne Louise Williams.

### 50-Yard Line Chili

2 lbs. ground round  
2 cans Bush's Chili Magic – Texas-style  
2 cans water  
1 large can tomato sauce  
2 cans Rotel tomatoes with green chiles  
2 Tbsp. chili powder  
2 Tbsp. garlic powder  
1 Tbsp. ground cumin  
1 small white onion, chopped  
1 green pepper, chopped  
1 or 2 tsp. red pepper flakes  
Salt and pepper to taste

Brown meat with all the spices, including the salt and pepper. Add onion and green pepper and cook 3-5 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for about 30 minutes. Serve with grated cheese, chopped onions and jalapeno peppers. □