



## It's Pumpkin and squash season. Here's the best way to dry and roast seeds



*Suddenly I am seeing many beautiful colors, shapes and sizes of pumpkins and squash in fields and local markets. Would you give me some ideas to use the seeds? Is there a way to preserve seeds for future use?* Elizabeth B. Los Osos

Pumpkins and winter squash are widely available now. They can be used in recipes or just for carving! But don't forget about the seeds! Pumpkins are not the only winter squash with seeds. Seeds from different squash are varied in size, shape, and texture. Have fun experimenting!

Drying seeds and roasting seeds are two different processes. Seeds must be washed to remove the pumpkin clinging to them before drying or roasting. Clean seeds can be dried in the sun, in a dehydrator set at 115-120°F for 1-2 hours or in an oven on a low setting for 3-4 hours according to the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. Stir frequently to avoid scorching. When roasting dried seeds, toss in olive oil and salt in a pre-heated 250°F oven for 10-15 minutes.

Here is one way to clean seeds before roasting or drying. Place a colander (or strainer) in a bowl filled with water. Scoop the seeds from your pumpkin and transfer to the colander. The seeds float, making separating the seeds from pumpkin flesh easier. Separate the seeds from any pumpkin flesh and pat dry with clean toweling. Removing excess water from the seeds can produce a crispier roasted seed or decrease drying time. Smaller seeds will roast more quickly, so adjust baking time accordingly.

The following roasting process and flavor ideas are adapted from <https://www.101cookbooks.com/toasted-pumpkin-seeds/>. This process roasts raw seeds. The choices related to seasoning your seeds are endless. Common seasonings include olive oil and salt, or try any number of spices, herbs, and seasonings. Sweet and salty, hot and spicy, the flavor combinations are limitless. Various recipes suggest seasoning seeds *prior* to roasting. Some spices tend to over bake or even burn. Try adding spices after roasting.

### Toasted Pumpkin Seeds: Three Ways

- 1 1/2 cups pumpkin seeds, clean and dry
  - 2 teaspoons olive oil
  - salt to taste
1. Preheat your oven to 375°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Toss the pumpkin seeds with the olive oil and salt.
  2. Transfer the seeds to the prepared baking sheet in a single layer. Bake for 15-30 minutes, or until seeds are deeply golden. You can finish under the broiler, but it is not necessary. (Baking time will vary depending on the size of the seed.)
  3. Remove from oven, allow to cool for a minute or two, and enjoy. Try stirring in any one of the following flavor combinations while seeds are still hot.

**Meyer Lemon Zest, Cayenne, and Olive:** Toss toasted seeds with the zest of one lemon, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, and 8 finely chopped olives\*.

**Sweet Curry:** Toss toasted seeds with 2 teaspoons of your favorite curry powder and 2 teaspoons brown sugar. Re-salt to taste.

**Garlic Chive:** Toss toasted seeds with 2 cloves of garlic\* that have been grated on a micro plane grater. Add a small handful of minced chives\* and toss again.

\*Refrigerate any uneaten seeds after 2 hours at room temperature if fresh ingredients have been added.

Authors: Michael, C., Ravalin, D., Soule, K.E. (October 2020)

**Published by The Tribune on Wednesday October 21, 2020 page 1C.** It is the policy of the University of California (UC) and the UC Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources not to engage in discrimination against or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities (Complete nondiscrimination policy statement can be found at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/files/215244.pdf>) Inquiries regarding ANR's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to John I. Sims, Affirmative Action Compliance Officer/Title IX Officer, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2801 Second Street, Davis, CA 95618, (530) 750-1397.