

# Pumpkin Stew Recipe

by  
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I hunt for recipes anywhere and everywhere I visit which includes stores that sell kitchen related items plus new and used book stores. In my experience, many so called new recipes are just the old ones with a new name. I have cookbooks from Brennan's of New Orleans dating from the early 1960's and another by an ancient Roman writer --- WOW, how much fun.

I discovered this particular recipe while shopping at Williams-Somona. It was written for a slow cooker oven they sell, but I reworked it because I prefer a Lodge Dutch Oven (see [www.lodgemfg.com](http://www.lodgemfg.com)). I usually rework all recipes based on my preferences. Give it a try --- you will find it absolutely delicious.

## The "WOW" Effect

To achieve the WOW effect a second pumpkin is needed, and it can be any variety if it is large enough to hold all of the stew when finished.

Set the pumpkin with the stew on the table. This becomes a great decoration with eye popping appeal; then ladle the stew into bowls while your guests watch. Remember, we first "eat" with our eyes. Eyes make food taste even better, if that is possible when beautifully served and in different ways.

You can put the entire pumpkin with the cooked stew inside into the oven to heat and then serve. Set the oven to about 300 degrees and cook about 30 minutes. While this setting should do the trick, your oven may require more or less time. Experiment first.

For an easier method, heat the stew in a pan while no one is looking and pour it into the pumpkin. Then put the pumpkin in the oven for only 15 minutes at 300 degrees and serve it. However you choose to do it, be careful not to leave the pumpkin in the oven too long as it becomes soft when overheated.

You can always serve it straight from your Lodge Dutch oven. This makes a great show and no one will be the wiser, if they have not seen it previously served in a pumpkin. Regardless of how you choose to serve it, the stew is FANTASTIC!

You can cook the stew one day and pop it into the refrigerator to serve another day --- with or without the pumpkin decoration.

Another serving idea is to allow some large bread rolls to air dry a few days, cut the top, hollow out the inner part, and serve the Pumpkin Stew in them. Place the stuffed bread rolls in a large, flat bowl on a plate to get the needed eye appeal. Remember --- EYE APPEAL.

## You Will Need These Items

- Lodge Dutch oven - either type, black or the beautiful ceramic one (see [www.lodgemfg.com](http://www.lodgemfg.com)).

- Stirring paddle or wooden spoon.
- Cutting board.
- Long, sharp knife for cutting the pumpkin.
- Short, sharp knife for trimming .
- Strong spoon to help you remove the seeds and strings.
- Bowls to serve the stew.
- Plates to hold the stew bowls for better eye appeal.
- Bread plate to hold the bread.
- Ladle to serve the stew.

### **Preparation Time**

The Williams-Sonoma cookbook said to allow 35 minutes preparation time. That is not realistic. To be on the safe side, allow an hour of preparation time. Cooking and preparation time for me is three hours to get the stew “table ready”.

### **Ingredients**

- 3 pounds of fancy chuck (choice or select), or inside round (bottom round) cut into 1 inch cubes trimmed so that no fat shows (to save time, ask your butcher to do it). Note: The more tender the beef the less time you will need to cook it; just check it after one hour.
- Salt and black pepper to taste (I do not cook with salt, but I suggest 1 teaspoon when you are cooking the beef and let others add more salt if they want).
- 2 tablespoons Colonna Extra Virgin olive oil.
- 1 large Texas yellow onion chopped to the size of your thumb.
- 2 fresh thyme sprigs (more if you want).
- 3 bay leaves (fresh or dried).
- 4 garlic cloves, each cut into four pieces or chopped (your choice).
- 2 sticks of cinnamon.
- 1/2 cup dry red wine (A dry red wine is one that has been fermented for a long time, thus reducing the sugar content to almost zero and increasing the alcohol content. Experienced chefs usually don't cook with any wine that they would not drink).
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar.
- 4 carrots, very large or a package of small carrots, cleaned and ready to eat (cut the small ones into 3 pieces and the large ones into bite size).

- 15 ounce can of diced tomatoes, drained (I use the salt free variety which allows me to control the amount of salt, but home canned tomatoes are better if you are lucky enough to have them; many of my friends have a ready supply of them).
- 2 cups beef or chicken stock (I use low salt chicken stock, but beef may be better, if you can find it).
- 3 pounds Sugar Pie pumpkin cut into 1 inch cubes --- **REMOVE THE RIND!** (Sugar Pie pumpkins are the best for cooking because they have a sweeter taste and smoother texture than other varieties. Don't use the jack-o-lantern variety because they are bred for thick rinds, not taste. A small one would be great to serve your Pumpkin Stew in).
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced.
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint.

### **Cooking the Pumpkin Stew**

- Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil to the Lodge Dutch oven and heat on the stove. Never place a cold Dutch oven on a hot burner; instead, heat the pot and burner together.
- Add the beef and brown it in several batches. Stir it to make sure it browns well and **DOES NOT BURN**. After browning, transfer the beef to a bowl and deglaze the **DUTCH OVEN** adding the drippings to the meat.
- Remove the Dutch oven from the stove and turn off the heat when finished.
- Prepare the pumpkin in advance of cooking the stew if you want to save time. Put it into zip lock baggies and store in the refrigerator (the pumpkin will be added later).
- In the Dutch oven, combine onion, thyme, bay leaves, vinegar, carrots, tomatoes, cinnamon, beef or chicken stock. Add the beef to the mixture.
- Spread the pumpkin over the beef and then mix well. **BE CAREFUL** --- both the Dutch Oven bottom and the cover will be **HOT!** Replace the cover and return it to the oven.
- Cook at 350 degrees until the pumpkin is tender. Check it 30 minutes and go from there. Cooking should take a maximum of 1 hour because the beef is already cooked to tender (I suggest checking it in 30 minutes because all you need to do with the final cooking is to cook the pumpkin). **WATCH OUT, THE DUTCH OVEN WILL BE HOT.**

### **Last Thing to do Before Serving**

In a small bowl, stir together these ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon Colonna extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

- A few grinds of fresh black pepper or any pepper (your guests can add salt and pepper to taste at the table)
- Thinly sliced onions (tops included)
- Torn fresh mint

Serve a dollop of the above mixture on top of the stew. The stew can also be served with a tablespoon of fat free Greek Yogurt on top as a decoration either with or without the onion mixture. If serving the yogurt, I suggest a sprinkle of paprika for color.

You can serve the stew directly from the oven with the bread of your choice, but I suggest whole wheat or white homemade bread. If you need an easy bread recipe, write to me (see email address below).

You may roast the pumpkin seeds if you wish. If you need information on that, please email me.

May I please have your comments. THANKS A LOT.

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