THE AMAZING PUMPKIN

THEY ARE ANCIENT.
Pumpkins are one of the oldest cultivated plants in the world and are believed to have originated in North America over 5000 years ago. Some scientists have dated seeds found in Mexico back to 7000 BC, which is closer to 9000 years ago!

THEY ARE DELICIOUS.
Pumpkins are savory, which means they are not sweet. Because of this, many people think of them as vegetables (nope, still fruits), but this savory squash can make some deliciously sweet things! Better yet, pumpkins are packed full of vitamins. You’ll find lots of vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, potassium, and fiber, to name a few.

The largest pumpkin pie ever baked was 20 feet in diameter and weighed nearly 3700 pounds!

How many of you would it take to equal the weight of the largest pumpkin pie ever made? (hint: divide 3700 by your weight)

Let’s learn some fun facts about this 5,000 year-old fruit!

That’s right, pumpkins are fruits.
They form from flowers and have the important job of getting the plant’s seeds out into the world (a pumpkin can have over 500 seeds!). They are also considered squash… and also gourds!

The family of fruit they belong to is called Cucurbitaceae (kyew-curb-i-tay-see-aye). Can you say that five times fast? The family includes over 800 species of squash, cucumbers, melon and more. All are fruits and most grow on vines!

What are your 3 favorite fruits?
1.  
2.  
3.  

They are everywhere!
Well, almost. Pumpkins can be found on every continent except Antarctica, because… ICE. The state of Washington grows plenty of pumpkins every year, but we are not even in the top 10 pumpkin producing states in the United States!

Can you guess what our top 10 agricultural commodities are? (hint: think fruits, veggies and animals)

1.  6.  
2.  7.  
3.  8.  
4.  9.  
5.  10.  

They need bees!
That’s right, you can grow a pumpkin plant from a seed, but for pumpkin flowers to turn into pumpkin fruits, pollinators are necessary! Pumpkin plants have male and female flowers. For a flower to create a fruit (pumpkin) a pollinator must visit. As a bee drinks nectar from different flowers on the plant, it transfers pollen from the male flower to the female flower and voila, you have a pumpkin! Thank you, bees!

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PUMPKIN SCIENCE

PUMPKIN Oobleck
This is a super fun way to use all the parts of your pumpkin. If you have a pie pumpkin, you can bake something delicious after you scoop out the insides, but with a regular carving pumpkin, you may want to try this sensory experiment! Oobleck is a non-Newtonian fluid, which means it doesn't really act like water (a Newtonian fluid) will act. Apply pressure on oobleck and it behaves more like a solid. Stop applying pressure and it behaves like a liquid. Interesting, right? This recipe is a twist on classic oobleck which you can create by slowly mixing a 1:1 ratio of cornstarch and water. You can start by gently pouring ½ cup (or so) of baking soda (plus a few drops of soap and food coloring) into your pumpkin and then adding vinegar until you see a reaction. You can also fill your pumpkin with a few cups of vinegar first (more if it's a huge pumpkin), add just a few drops of soap and food coloring, and then add scoops of baking soda until you see a reaction! You may have to stir. Better yet, make a hypothesis (educated guess) on which method will work better and try them both!

WHAT HAPPENS:
When baking soda (a base) and vinegar (an acid) are mixed together, a chemical reaction occurs and one of the products is carbon dioxide, a gas which wants to escape to the surface. That is what makes the fizz! Add soap to increase the fizziness.

READY FOR MORE?
If you are ready to take your pumpkin science to the next level, how about extracting DNA from a pumpkin? Did you know 60% of your DNA is the same as a pumpkins? That’s right, you are 60% pumpkin! Check out this great experiment we love from Rosie Research and you might even get to extract and observe some DNA!

rosieresearch.com/pumpkin-dna-extraction

Aside from pumpkins being super interesting, here are just a few of the many fun science activities you can do with them! Regardless of which activities you choose to do, make sure you work with an adult and think about the safest way to conduct each experiment. Have clean up supplies ready and it is always a good idea to wear protective gear (eye protection, apron, gloves, etc).