

hot & sunny



Peppery Pumpkinseed Salsa

By Sunny Conley Photography by Russell Barnert



Celebrate autumn by serving a favorite salsa in hollowed out miniature pumpkins. I suggest Peppery Pumpkinseed Salsa that uses the reclaimed seeds.

What gives Pumpkinseed Salsa its pep is the mildly pungent poblano [poh-BLAH-noh] pepper. It looks similar to a bell, but its jacket sports a richer shade of dark forest green, and it delivers, I believe, much more flavor with just a smidgeon of heat. Poblanos are often used to make chiles rellenos but I substitute them regularly in recipes that call for bell peppers. It's also my pod of choice as a substitute for the traditional stuffed bell pepper, with which we're most familiar. In their dried state, poblanos are known as ancho chiles, which are used mostly in sauces, particularly moles.

Peppery Pumpkinseed Salsa, made colorful and crunchy with fresh corn kernels, is underscored with pinches of ground peppercorns and cumin seeds. Lime juice adds spunk. Serve it as topping for grilled or baked fish, or substitute chicken. Don't waste the "bowl"! Once empty, the pumpkin can be baked and served as a vegetable, or used in other recipes.



PEPPERY PUMPKINSEED SALSA
(Makes about 4 cups.)

- 5 to 6 miniature edible pumpkins
- 1 cup fresh corn kernels (depending on size, you'll need about two stalks)
- 6 tomatillos, peeled, rinsed and diced
- 1 cup fresh (or packaged) pumpkinseeds, toasted
- 1 poblano chile, roasted, peeled, seeded and julienned
- Juice of 1 lime
- ½ teaspoon fresh ground cumin seed or to taste
- Salt and fresh ground peppercorns to taste*

If using fresh corn, strip off the husk and silk. Then, using a small sharp-edged knife, cut off enough kernels to equal one cup. Put the corn and tomatillos in a medium-size bowl. To prepare fresh toasted pumpkinseeds, see recipe below. Blister the ancho chile on all sides over a grill or under a broiler. Place in a freezer bag and seal. Let poblano sweat 10 minutes to loosen skin. Cool slightly. Peel off skin and julienne. Add chile and remaining ingredients to bowl and refrigerate covered for at least two hours. (Tastes best if served the same day.) Just before serving, cut the top out of each pumpkin. I use a grapefruit spoon to gently scrape away the seeds and fiber from the shell. Heap each pumpkin shell with salsa and serve next to each plate.

*Most packaged pumpkinseeds are already well salted, so skip the salt!

TOASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS

- 1½ cups pumpkins, fresh
- 2 tsp. melted butter or olive oil
- Salt (optional)

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Rinse off as much pumpkin pulp as you like - leaving a little bit adds flavor. Toss pumpkin seeds in a bowl with the melted butter or oil. Spread pumpkin seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake for about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally.

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