



## **Let's Give 'em Pumpkin to Talk About!** ***Carving out Fall Fun in MBPR's Client Destinations***

Good morning ... and welcome to another edition of MBPR's weekly offering of fun as we continue to cope with COVID-19. You'll notice our weekly topics have been fall-related these past few weeks, from fall foliage to apples and today, we're focusing on that most adored fall squash ... pumpkins!

Officially, we're still in the dog days of summer, but signs of the changing season and cooler weather are slowly making their welcome appearance. The sun is setting a bit earlier, Halloween candy is popping up in the aisles of neighborhood grocery stores, and perhaps the surest sign is that Starbucks' coveted [Pumpkin Spice Latte](#) is back. The sweet treat hit stores earlier than ever this year, making its seasonal debut this past Tuesday, August 25.

No matter how you feel about "PSL's," we thought the time was right to talk about pumpkins. So, we surveyed our client destinations to see who had some memorable pumpkin-focused experiences to share with you. From pumpkin festivals to pumpkin patches and even a pumpkin soup recipe, we're excited to share our roundup of good – or maybe that's "gourd"? – ideas.

For those who plan on doing some pumpkin carving of their own this year, we even have some expert tips and tricks in the Dollywood entry.

May your pumpkins all wear smiley faces this season!

Cheers & Stay Healthy,

Ashley

*As always, if you'd prefer not to receive these messages, just send a note back to us and we'll remove you from our list.*



A pond of frog-o-lanterns at Dollywood's Great Pumpkin LumiNights.

### **Get Inspired by Great Pumpkin LumiNights at Dollywood Pigeon Forge, Tennessee**

The Great Smoky Mountains offer spectacular views for leaf-peeping, but as the days become shorter and the nights grow longer, the celebrated [Dollywood](#) theme park goes all aglow as dusk falls. The 160-acre park is in east Tennessee, where peak leaf-peeping season typically begins around mid-October. Dollywood reopened in June with new safety and sanitation procedures in effect, and those will continue throughout the annual [Harvest Festival](#), set for September 25 to October 31. The event offers a colorful autumn atmosphere; the sounds of bluegrass and Southern gospel music on open-air stages; delicious fall foods; homemade crafts from world-class artisans; and [Great Pumpkin LumiNights](#), a glowing pumpkin experience that brings the park alive in a family-friendly way as night falls. **Thousands of pumpkins** of every shape and size decorate the park and lend an air of festive fall fun. Scary and frightening are never part of the Dollywood brand, so there's nothing spooky about this experience. Instead, what draws visitors to the park at this time of year are the stunning leaves of the Smokies, those thousands of pumpkins, and the mouthwatering aromas of smoked brisket, corn pudding and cinnamon bread.

We tapped into Dollywood's chief pumpkin carver, Jaimie Christian-Houser, to provide some **expert tricks for those attempting pumpkin-carving at home**. Here are some of her best tips:

- *Have an idea of what you want to carve in advance so you can select a pumpkin with the right-sized surface area for what you envision.*
- *Don't buy a pumpkin without a stem; it won't last as long! For that reason, NEVER pick up a pumpkin by its stem.*
- *Before you carve, completely wipe down the pumpkin and then wipe it down again after carving to avoid mold.*

- For lighting, consider using an LED bulb on a cord (cut a notch in the back of the pumpkin for the cord to run through). This method is safer than a candle and it won't cook the pumpkin's insides!
- Heat makes pumpkins rot, so try to find a shaded spot to display them. But if you really want to extend their life, bring them inside.
- When it comes to teaching kids, draw or print a simple design and tape it to the pumpkin. Poke holes with a toothpick (store-bought kits usually have a tool for this), remove the paper and cut where the holes are.



*A glowing pumpkin-sculpted spider on display at Dollywood's Great Pumpkin LumiNights.*

**Pick the Perfect Pumpkin at Strawberry Hill U.S.A.  
Chesnee, South Carolina**

South Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains offer a spectacular display of fall foliage, and what better autumnal outdoor activity is there than pumpkin picking? Located in the town of Chesnee in upstate South Carolina is [Strawberry Hill U.S.A.](#), the retail portion of Cooley Farms, a family operation that offers 1,000 acres of everyone's favorite gourd. From peaches to blackberries and strawberries, the farm grows a variety of fruits, vegetables, and squash ... including pumpkins! Pumpkin season here starts in mid-September and lasts through October, with a variety of pumpkin sizes, shapes and colors for the whole family to choose from. Guests can also enjoy an array of fall harvest activities, including festive hayrides and an action-packed corn maze (the largest in the county) that's full of twists and turns for a fun adventure. Pumpkins are priced by the pound ... so, you'll know what to expect as you choose your own pumpkins! Be sure to stop at the farm's Café and Ice Cream Parlor before leaving to select a variety of house-spun ice cream and seasonal baked goods, all of which can be enjoyed from your perch in a comfy rocking chair overlooking the farm during its harvest.



*Simply admire or take your pick from several oversized pumpkins at Strawberry Hill U.S.A.*

### **Try This Jamaican Pumpkin Soup Recipe** **Negril, Jamaica**

Let's talk about the pumpkins in Jamaica. Yes, you heard that right ... Jamaica. It's not a destination we normally associate with autumn and leaf-peeping season, but it's a place that knows its way around pumpkins. The squash is widely grown throughout Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean. With that said, our resort client [Sunset at the Palms](#) offered up this most delicious Pumpkin Soup recipe that we're excited to share.

This dish is often served at Sunset at the Palms, an all-inclusive, adults-only treehouse-style resort that's best described as chic, intimate and serene. A stay here features air-conditioned accommodations in 85 guest rooms with private balconies; private beach access and a variety of non-motorized sports; a swimming pool; all meals and beverages; and Club MoBay VIP arrival service at Sangster Airport in Montego Bay, for fast tracking through immigrations and customs.

The traditional Jamaican Pumpkin Soup is considered a "Saturday Soup" by island residents. We think it'll be a delicious treat to curl up with on chilly autumn evenings ... any day of the week!

#### **Ingredients:**

- ½ cup chopped onion
- 2½ pounds pumpkin, peeled and cut into medium dice
- 2¼ quarts chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 Scotch Bonnet pepper, whole
- 3 scallions, sliced thin
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 to 3 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped

- Salt and pepper, to taste
- ¼ pound butter

Instructions:

1. Sauté onions in butter in large pot until transparent.
2. Add pumpkin and fill with stock.
3. Add the remaining ingredients – except the Scotch Bonnet pepper – and bring to a boil.
4. Add pepper whole and reduce heat.
5. Allow to simmer for approximately 30 minutes, or until desired consistency.
6. This part is really important: Remove the Scotch Bonnet pepper! Then, serve hot.

**Experience “Pumpkins In The City” at Silver Dollar City**

**Branson, Missouri**

Nestled in the lakeside beauty of the Ozark Mountains is [Branson, Missouri](#), one of America’s greatest family destinations. It offers breathtaking views of fall foliage from mid-September through November. Not only can visitors soak up the rich colors of autumn through curated fall driving and walking tours that the local tourism office, Explore Branson, has developed, but guests can also enjoy the celebratory spirit of autumn at one of America’s most beloved and top-rated theme parks, Silver Dollar City. With a host of added health measures in place, the park will welcome visitors for its annual [Harvest Festival](#), slotted for September 23 through October 31. This year’s festival features specialty “Craft Days” and more than 10,000 carved pumpkins throughout “Pumpkins In The City.” By day, the park is home to artisans demonstrating and selling their work, all in the spirit of true craftsmanship that has long been a signature of the Ozark Mountain experience. By night, Silver Dollar City hosts non-frightful fun for the entire family. The park is transformed by thousands of glowing pumpkins and family-friendly, larger-than-life scarecrows, cats, owls, and other fall characters, as well as a nightly dance party at the festive Pumpkin Plaza. And it’s never a party here without the very best food, featuring pumpkin-infused everything ... from funnel cakes to churros.



*Silver Dollar City's scrumptious pumpkin funnel cake.*