

# Pastorino Farms

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## Pumpkin History

Pumpkins or pumpkin-like squash are known to have first existed in both North and South America. Their remnants have been found in mountainous areas of North America, in what is now Mexico and date back approximately 8,000 years. Early European explorers in South America found Indians eating pumpkin-like melons as a large part of their diet.

The name 'pumpkin' originated by the English in the 17th century. It was derived from the long forgotten words 'pumpion' and 'pompion'. The name 'pumpkin' comes from the Greek 'pepon' meaning large melon.

It is commonly known by historians that squash was the first plant cultivated by North American Indians well over 2,000 years ago.

Although corn introduced to the early Americans (Pilgrims) by the North American Indians was credited for helping the Pilgrims succeed in their new land, it was also the pumpkin that was introduced to the Pilgrims that allowed the corn to grow and not to be devoured by small animals. The pumpkin vines with their thorn like skins were grown around the corn stacks keeping animals away.

The Halloween holiday which precedes the Christian holiday, 'All Saints Day' covets the pumpkin in its "jack-o'-lantern" form as a symbol of the holiday. Early in Ireland, the Irish hollowed out, then carved turnips and potatoes with images of strange faces, then inserted candles. These 'lanterns' were thought to scare away the spirits 'that walked the earth at night'. The Irish immigrants coming to the new land discovered that the pumpkin was much easier to carve than a turnip or a potato, so... We embrace the pumpkin in the form of a jack-o'-lantern as a traditional image of Halloween. Of course, we now celebrate its carving as a family tradition or as a pretense to gather friends and be festive.