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DOOR TO WELLNESS

CHUAN SPA AT THE LANGHAM HUNTINGTON,
PASADENA (CA)



[in the mix]



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Good Gourd

Pumpkins are a fall staple in the kitchen, but they also offer a bevy of benefits—skincare and otherwise—in the spa.

AS THE LEAVES BEGIN TO CHANGE AND cooler temperatures take hold, you may want to consider adding some fall favorites to your treatment menu. One ingredient that never disappoints is pumpkin, which is chock-full of alpha- and beta-carotenes, fiber, magnesium, potassium, and vitamin E, making it as gratifying to skincare as pumpkin pie is to Thanksgiving dinner.

Ultimate Nourisher

According to the National Institute of Health, vitamin E protects against free radicals and helps combat acne. Pumpkin seed oil contains five of the eight chemical forms of this multitasking powerhouse, making pumpkin an ideal skin treatment. Ellen Reeder, manager of **Isabella Spa-Salon** at Belhurst Castle (Geneva, NY) highlights the super squash in her Pumpskin Hydrating Facial (\$125, 80 minutes), which relies on products from Éminence Organic Skin Care. The gourd's complex molecular makeup—that is, the fact that the fruit is full of so many varied nutrients—allows it to work on a deeper level when applied topically than

other lone ingredients. “Pumpkin seeds contain zinc, which is great for controlling hormone levels and oil, and its vitamin content boosts collagen production,” says Reeder.

Effective Exfoliator

It also serves as a great exfoliator. “Pumpkin contains the highest content of naturally occurring vitamin A and beta-carotene among any other fruit,” says Rhonda Allison, founder and CEO of Rhonda Allison Cosmeceuticals. “It has a detoxifying effect in which the natural salicylic and retinoic acids support the digestive aspect of cell turnover.” **Spa Lamar** (Scottsdale, AZ) uses Rhonda Allison cleansers and serums in its Pumpkin Facial (\$125, 55 minutes), because the fruit resurfaces skin and decreases inflammation. “Our facial is great for clients aged 35 and older who have sensitive skin but are looking for the results of a chemical peel,” says lead esthetician Kasey Brown.

For anti-aging, Lonnie Dickerson, spa manager at **The Spa at Travaasa Austin** (TX) recommends

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mixing in a citrus such as orange, which she has done in the spa's Farm-to-Face Pumpkin Facial (\$180, 80 minutes). According to her, vitamin C from the orange adds an extra layer of cleansing and exfoliating power on top of the pumpkin's brightening benefits.

The face isn't the only part of the body that can benefit from pumpkin-infused treatments. "Enzymes and alpha hydroxy acids found in pumpkin exfoliate for a smooth, healthy glow," says Sara Dolentz, spa director at Teton Mountain Lodge's **Solitude Spa** (Teton Village, WY). That's why it's a prime ingredient in the Fall into a Pumpkin Pedi (\$75, 60 minutes). Relying on a roster of FarmHouse Fresh products, the therapeutic treatment features a mud and pumpkin puree mask accompanied by a milk soak and a brown sugar and bourbon scrub. FarmHouse's Splendid Dirt Mask, made from pure organic pumpkin, plays a starring role in the pedicure, says Delia McLinden, vice president of sales for FarmHouse Fresh. "The mask allows the pumpkin to envelop skin for several minutes as the mud dries. It packs a one-two punch; enzymes pull away dry skin while vitamins soothe and firm."

The Pumpkin Exfoliating Body Massage (\$165, 80 minutes) at **Spa Vitale** (San Francisco) stimulates sluggish lymphatic systems and improves circulation with a specially formulated pumpkin scrub. A relaxing bath of buttermilk, coconut oil, and honey maximizes the fruit's delivery of antioxidant

benefits. "Our goal after such an invigorating scrub is to soothe and calm, effectively neutralizing the exfoliant activity," says spa director Debra Townes.

Natural Skin Saver

In the Farm-to-Body Pumpkin Detox Body Wrap (\$185, 80 minutes) at The Spa at Travaasa Austin, Ilike Organic Skin Care's Hydrating Pumpkin Body Wrap is mixed with cinnamon and organic pumpkin from the resort's own garden to produce a more nourishing salve. The homemade puree, which is foraged by the hotel's farm manager and mashed up by the chef, is applied after an exfoliating Yoghurt Power Peel. Topping it off is a gentle massage with carotene cream. "It's not only hydrating but also very detoxifying and stimulating," says Dickerson. "Guests love that we go the extra mile to provide something fresh."

Fall Scentsation

The earthy scent of pumpkin can also have a positive effect on spa-goers' moods. When used in an aromatherapy massage, it can aid in digestion, reduce bloating, and even—says a study conducted by Chicago's Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation—act as an aphrodisiac for men. If you're seeking to create the intoxicating aroma in your spa's treatments that is associated with pumpkin pie, Allison advises combining the squash with clove and cinnamon, which also help increase its antioxidant action.

At **The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Half Moon Bay** (CA), guests can purchase a pumpkin-scented Me! Bath Ice Cream ball to bring the delicious fragrance home with them. The spa, which is located in the pumpkin capital of the world, offers a variety of squash-themed treatments year-round. Says spa director Alison Abbott, it is definitely one of the greatest head-to-toe luxurious and therapeutic ingredients available in spas.

Of course, anyone with a pumpkin allergy should steer clear of treatments containing the ingredient. And because pumpkin is so active and stimulating, it may not be a viable option for spa-goers with highly sensitive skin, sunburn, cracked heels, or open cuts, says Dolentz. Most clients, however, will want to help themselves to a slice of the metaphorical pie.—*Katarina Kovacevic*

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