

# FANTASTIC Fall



## Fall is here.

**But that doesn't mean the fun has to end. There are many exciting activities that the whole family can enjoy in this enchanting season.**

Even though summer has ended, there are still plenty of options for family fun. The cool, crisp air and changing color of the leaves will inspire everyone to venture outdoors. Bike rides, bonfires, winery tours and hayrides will keep you and your family delighted all season long.

One exciting activity is to pack up the whole family for a trip to the grand countryside. There are many farms throughout the country that allow your family to pick your own fruits and vegetables. What better way to get the freshest produce and spend fun quality time with your family? Products picked fresh from a farm will taste better and are even better for you than anything bought in a grocery store.

One such farm is Eckert's, located in the St. Louis region. They offer three different farms where families can pick their own produce. They also provide school and group tours, bonfire parties and hayrides. If you're in the St. Louis region, or planning a trip, visit [www.eckerts.com](http://www.eckerts.com) for more information.

Two great fall items to choose from are apples and pumpkins. These items not only make tasty treats to eat, but they also can be used for unique decorations throughout the home.

The scent of baked apples is essential for the fall season, whether it's coming from a delicious pie or a bowl of potpourri. Apples are at their prime in September and October. With an abundance of varieties, it's not hard to find one that will fit your taste buds. Slice and eat, make caramel sauce for dipping, or bake a tasty pie or cake. *(continued, page 12)*



An easy family activity to recreate the smell of a baked apple pie is to make a dried apple wreath.

What you will need:

- Juice of approximately 10 lemons
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 8-10 large firm apples
- 8 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons allspice
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 8"-10" sturdy, heavy gauge wire
- 1 – 1 ½ yards of 1" ribbon

How to make your apple wreath:

- 1) Place lemon juice in a large bowl, stir in salt.
- 2) Peel, core, and slice apples horizontally into ¼" thick circles. Soak slices in the lemon juice bowl for approximately 6-10 minutes, making sure each side has a chance to absorb some of the lemon juice.
- 3) Meanwhile, mix spices in a bowl and blend well.
- 4) Remove the slices from the bowl and place them on paper towels. Pat tops of apple slices with paper towels.
- 5) Dust apple slices with spice mixture. Turn slices over and repeat on the opposite side.
- 6) Place apples in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake at 150-200 degrees fahrenheit for 4-6 hours or until completely dried. Apple slices should be slightly pliable.
- 7) Carefully shape wire into desired shape, such as a circle or a heart.
- 8) Fold each apple slice in half, and then into quarters and thread the slices onto the wire. Continue to pack on the folded apples until the wire is completely filled.
- 9) When the wire is covered, use pliers to bend ends into hooks so that they connect and close.
- 10) Using your ribbon, create a hanger for your wreath.
- 11) Hang on your wall, or package as a gift for someone special.



Aside from apples, Fall's most fabulous fruit is the pumpkin. Going to the pumpkin patch is an exciting activity whether you're young or just young at heart. Visions of Jack-o-Lanterns glowing, or dreaming about a tasty pie is sure to be a motivator to get out of the house.

If your plan is to carve Jack-o-Lanterns, look for a "big monster pumpkin" for the most carving area. Also look for one that has a level bottom so it can easily stand upright. There are many inexpensive kits available with a variety of patterns, carving saws and tools to create an impressive design.

While the flesh of the large pumpkins used for carving is not the best for cooking, their seeds are great. Roasting the seeds makes an easy, healthy snack, and will send a nice aroma throughout your home. Here's a simple recipe:

- 1 ½ cups pumpkin seeds
- 2 tsp. melted butter or oil (olive or vegetable oil)
- Salt to taste

Options to add taste:

- Garlic powder
- Cayenne pepper
- Seasoning salt
- Cajun seasoning blend

Preheat oven to 300° F.

While it's OK to leave some strings and pulp on your seeds (it adds flavor), clean off any major chunks. Toss pumpkin seeds in a bowl with the melted butter or oil and seasonings of your choice. Spread pumpkin seeds in a single layer on baking sheet. Bake for about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally, until golden brown.

So whether you want to stay at home or get out of the house, cook or decorate, there are plenty of activities for you and your family to enjoy all throughout the fall season. Bundle up and enjoy!

*Photos courtesy of Eckert's Country Store & Farms, Belleville, Illinois. For more information visit [www.eckerts.com](http://www.eckerts.com).*