



OFF MENU

Falling for pumpkin

BY JULIA VIOLET

As the days become shorter and nights grow colder, something shifts—and suddenly we want pumpkin. We want to pick them, paint them, carve them, drink them and eat them. For all the pumpkin lovers, here are seven local places that will fill your cravings when that pumpkin hunger inevitably kicks in.

Our first stop is situated between two auto shops on Power Inn Road: Emma's Tamales and Natural Foods Co. Among its meat, vegetarian and vegan tamales (cooked behind the restaurant) is the pumpkin tamale (\$2.50). It's crumbly masa outer layer perfectly complements the sweetness of the creamy pumpkin filling, made with cinnamon, sugar and egg whites. Pour on mild, hot, or habanero salsa if you want a spicy kick.

Craving pumpkin ice cream? Turn to Gunther's Ice Cream. It doubled down on pumpkin offerings this fall, selling both its

seasonal ice cream and a frozen pumpkin bon bon (\$1.05). The bon bon consists of creamy ice cream encapsulated in a thin, crispy, dark chocolate orb—just petite and sweet enough to make you want a few more.

If you want something more pumpkin-forward and spicy, head to Original Grateful Bread for a seasonal pumpkin spice scone (\$2.25) or pumpkin bar (\$2.50). The scone had a delicious spread of pumpkin glaze over a tender, triangular, spice-filled scone, with crispy corner bites. The pumpkin bar was ultra-creamy with a heavy pumpkin puree-like top and a soft graham-cracker base.

A super satisfying dessert-like pumpkin treat is also found at Pushkin's. Its Pumpkin Spice Chocolate Coffee Cake is decadent, massive and dense with a crumbly top that you won't want to share. Chock-full of dark chocolate chunks and cinnamon laced

throughout, it has just enough pumpkin to remind you of fall.

La Esperanza Bakery's Empanada de Calabaza is stuffed with mild pumpkin in a pocket-like pastry, similar to a turnover. Pro tip: Call ahead to check if they sold out before journeying to the bakery.

For a cold twist on pumpkin, Pearls Boba on Fair Oaks Boulevard sells a seasonal pumpkin spice milk tea (\$4). Choose from either a chai or green tea base and add toppings such as boba for 50 cents. Personally, I recommend the chai; the sweetness of the pumpkin balances out its spiciness.

Lastly, for a sip and a spook, skip Starbucks for Oblivion Comics & Coffee's Pumpkin King Latte, complete with a latte art drawing of Jack Skellington of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* on its foamy top.

However you get pumped for fall, there's no shame in pumpkin spicing things up. □

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