

# **Beyond pumpkin spice, what “big flavor” fall harvest specials truly shine?**

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## **Embracing the True Flavors of Autumn**

As the leaves begin their fiery transformation and a crisp chill fills the air, the culinary world often defaults to one pervasive flavor: pumpkin spice. While a classic, it barely scratches the surface of the rich, diverse palette autumn truly offers. This season is a bounty of hearty vegetables, sweet fruits, and warming spices that deserve their moment in the spotlight. Let's delve into the “big flavor” fall harvest specials that truly shine, offering depth, comfort, and a genuine taste of the season.



## **The Earthy Comfort of Root Vegetables & Gourds**

Beyond the orange gourd, fall is prime time for an array of magnificent root vegetables and other squash varieties. Think about the sweet, nutty profile of roasted butternut squash, often enhanced with sage and brown butter, or the unexpected sweetness of parsnips and carrots caramelized in honey. Beets, with

their vibrant color and earthy sweetness, make incredible purées, risottos, or even delightful salads. Sunchokes (Jerusalem artichokes) offer a delicate, nutty flavor perfect in soups or roasted alongside other seasonal produce. These vegetables aren't just sides; they can be the star of a truly memorable fall dish, providing texture, color, and a grounding flavor that feels inherently autumnal.

## **Apple & Pear: More Than Just Pie Fillings**

While apple pie is a quintessential fall treat, these beloved fruits offer so much more. Crisp apples, like Honeycrisp or Granny Smith, can be incorporated into savory dishes, such as pork tenderloin with apple chutney, or a vibrant fall salad with walnuts and blue cheese. Pears, with their subtle sweetness and elegant texture, are fantastic in tarts, roasted with game hens, or paired with strong cheeses for an appetizer that sings with seasonal flavor. Spices like cardamom, ginger, and a touch of black pepper can elevate these fruits beyond their typical sweet applications, revealing their sophisticated side.



## **Warmth from the Woods: Maple, Nuts, and Foraged Flavors**

The woods offer an abundance of autumnal flavors. Maple syrup, especially dark robust varieties, provides a depth of sweetness far beyond refined sugar, perfect for glazes on roasted vegetables, in desserts, or even as a counterpoint to smoky bacon. Pecans, walnuts, and hazelnuts toast beautifully, adding crunch and rich, buttery notes to salads, stuffings, or desserts. And for the adventurous, foraged mushrooms like chanterelles or hen-of-the-woods bring an umami richness that transforms a simple pasta or risotto into a gourmet fall experience. These flavors evoke cozy cabins and crisp forest walks.



## **The Bright Tartness of Cranberry and Pomegranate**

To cut through the richness of many fall dishes, the vibrant tartness of cranberries and pomegranates is indispensable. Fresh cranberries simmered with orange zest and a touch of spice make an unparalleled sauce, not just for turkey, but for pork, chicken, or even as a topping for baked brie. Pomegranate arils add a burst of juicy sweetness and a stunning ruby hue to salads, grain bowls, or as a garnish for almost any autumnal dish. These fruits offer a refreshing contrast, brightening heavier flavors and adding a festive touch.





## **Spices Beyond the Usual Suspects**

While cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger are fall staples, expanding your spice rack can unlock incredible new dimensions. Allspice, with its complex notes of clove, nutmeg, and cinnamon, is fantastic in both sweet and savory applications. Cloves, star anise, and even a touch of cardamom can add sophisticated warmth to braises, spiced drinks, or baked goods. Smoked paprika lends a beautiful depth to stews and roasted dishes, while fresh sage and rosemary are perfect partners for hearty meats and root vegetables. Don't be afraid to experiment and combine these spices in unexpected ways to craft truly unique seasonal offerings.



This fall, challenge yourself to look beyond the predictable. The harvest offers an incredible array of bold, nuanced flavors waiting to be explored. From earthy roots to bright berries and aromatic spices, these “big flavor” specials truly capture the essence of autumn, inviting us to savor the season in all its delicious complexity.