

HOW TO GET AMAZING Pumpkin Carving Photos

by Ruth Collis



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Type of digital Camera to Have - that works best

- 10X or more zoom
Preferably an SLR (inter-changeable lens) camera where you have a lens range of somewhere around 18-70mm
- Image brightening feature - Dynamic Range Optimizer (DRO) to get rid of dark photos
- A Mode Dial that makes settings easy
(auto, sport, flower, landscape, portrait, night, etc.)
- LCD display
(for image preview after you've taken the photo)

You can use a point-and-shoot consumer camera and get good results, which I started out on, but then I had the need for a better tool with more professional results, and saved up for a long time, using a few tax returns to get a Sony A-100 at the time. This camera has all these features above.

Megapixel Note: If you get any higher than 5 megapixel camera, transferring the photos to your computer will take a lot longer, plus will need dubbing down for the web and email. If you are interested in prints and blowing your pictures up from there, a higher than 5 megapixel camera (and probably the latest available on the market) might be your better option.

The Sony A-100 above that I got, was a 10 mp that I could dub down to only use the 2.5 mp feature, as I still have to crop down pictures from there for the web and email to get smaller file sizes.

*For best results, use a **tripod** to hold the camera still to allow the most light in, since you are dealing with more darkness here than usual. If there's any camera shake, the photo will come out blurry. If you don't have a tripod, you can even rest the camera on a book, short ladder, or something to hold it steady.

Camera Settings

Look for the Mode dial on the outside of the camera as a hardware feature, or the Mode settings within the camera software. These are the settings you want to play with to get different lighting effects. Night mode, and Sport may turn out a little better than just the Auto setting.

They will give you the best photos for this type of night pumpkin carving photo shoot, because they are designed to get the most amount of light in by either keeping the shutter open longer for more light, or speeding up the ISO (shutter speed for moving objects).



For the background setting, I took our photos with an assistant in an old almost-abandoned looking storage back-house to show you can take awesome photos, without having a professional studio. Just get a plain background like a sheet or this mattress, and start playing with lighting, camera angles, and zoom. Click here to see [Behind the Scenes Video](#).



Take many candles and a lighter with you, as the candle will burn down and give less light inside the pumpkin before you finish your awesome photos. Nowadays, it's better to use an LED light, or battery operated looking candle, that's safer and won't burn anything down with fire.

Lighting

Turn off your camera flash, and use other lights to play with. If you don't know how to turn it off, just put a piece of dark tape over like, like black electrical tape.

Try a back lit pumpkin lighting vs. room lit. Both look cool. The light on the back side of the pumpkin lit inside, makes it look scarier. The room lighting pumpkin on right, looks more friendly, and you can see the color of the pumpkin better.



This one with just plain room lighting, and the light inside the pumpkin, really made a beautiful yellow glow, almost as if the house is on fire with burning timbers. That's a real photo, not one morphed to look like one with orange gradations of graphics.



Here's making the room totally dark so your carving will really glow. Notice how you see no round pumpkin shape at all, just the carving is the focus.



This one has the pumpkin lid adjusted where light shines up to show it. This is where you might want to consider whether you want that in the shot or not.



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If you really want to draw attention to a glowing lid, adjust it so you can see some dramatic height of the lid.



Angles

Most pumpkin shots are good closeup, without much background, unless you're background is interesting, like getting shadows. Use the zoom feature, or rotate your lens to get the camera to crop out the background, where your carving subject is center of focus and filling the frame. This turned out to be one of the best shots because of that.



This candle in glass was one of two used in the picture above.

One is in the pumpkin bottom, and the other is being held while the picture was being taken.

It actually made a dreamy fluid effect without planning.



Effects

Just a plain simple black marker outline can create a whole different effect. It gives the design more punch. You can touch this up after the carving for the best effect.



Here it is in yellow light. Try different settings and see what you get.



This one looks way wicked just because of how the lighting is... or isn't there. The outside room lighting is all dark, leaving just the glow of the inside pumpkin light, and from trying different settings. Just turn the camera knob to try the same shot, but with each a different selection. Each selection will have a different lighting effect.



Notice how just a faint hint of light on front, makes the marker lines show up, but ruins the dark silhouette look of above. The dark look is better to draw out some contrast. If you want the marker lines on the actual design to show up, then add more light to make a point of that to show up in your photo.



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Another effect is being able to use the carving template also as a painting template. Just poke dots around the design edges with a toothpick or poky wheel cutting tool, and paint along the dotted lines instead of carve.



But best of all, is being able to do both **Painting by Day** on one side of the pumpkin, and a **Carving for Night** on the other side.

Notice how you can take the lit carving inside, and “project” it so to speak, on to a wall or old mattress like this, and get a way cool shadow effect. Then small-light it on the front to show the painting, but not so much light that it destroys the cool shadow in back. You will amaze people doing this trick, and your skill will increase the more you play and test these settings and effects.



Now notice the pumpkin lid left on here to keep light from escaping the top. This one had a bottom lid carved out, and pumpkin set OVER the candle light.



Take note of the light left on upstairs. This was actually carved through by accident, but turned out pretty neat. So you could experiment with carving some through, carving some only half way, or leaving some painting to show, that gives a cool tattoo look, like here, and neat glow.



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Now where you stand has a whole bearing on what effect you get. Standing to the side above, puts focus on that great shadow. Standing in front, shows you more of the detail on the pumpkin as well as the lighting, but now draws people in to what you did, and to the light left on upstairs with the two windows cut out.



Carving half way through the pumpkin flesh will make some of the design stand out; but if you carve all the way through the painting, it will show the carve on the other side as well, and not turn out as great. So experimenting is key. Just get in there and do it and don't be afraid to make mistakes, because that's how you learn... just like light on upstairs here.

For more on what digital camera to get, see a **Beginning Camera Buying Guide** I made:

<http://www.paintingtemplates.com/camera-buying-guide.htm>

For cool free **pumpkin carving templates**, visit by clicking here:

www.PaintingTemplates.com/pumpkin_carving.htm