

Forbes

Meet The Master Carver Who Can Put Your Face On A Pumpkin



Brent Heuser is the master carver in residence at The High Line Hotel in New York City this October. THE HIGHLINE HOTEL

Carving pumpkins and Halloween are synonymous. Every year you can expect the orange squash to adorn the steps of homes throughout the country. Some even go all out by creating elaborate designs that go way beyond the classic triangle-eyed Jack-o'-lantern. One such person is Brent Heuser.

The Ohio native garnered a lot of social media buzz for his intricate portrait carvings of famous people. In fact, he won a carving competition for his likeness of "Frozen's" Elsa

drinking icy craft brew and created a Lady Gaga centerpiece for her “Joanne” album release party. Now, he recently kicked his knife skills up a notch by becoming the master carver in residence at New York City’s The High Line Hotel.

Started October 4 and running through Halloween, the landmark property is offering an exclusive Pumpkin Service, Bottle Service. What does that entail exactly? Well, you’ll get a reserved table in the front garden where you’ll be served a bottle of Veuve Clicquot Brut Yellow Label NV. As you sip away, Heuser will custom carve a pumpkin to the design of your choice in about 45 minutes. A portrait of yourself? Your favorite celebrity? Your pet? Heuser is up for any challenge.

Curious how one becomes a master carver, I chatted with Heuser during ahead of the haunting holiday to find out how he stumbled into squash artistry.

Q: How did you even get started carving pumpkins?

A: Brent Pumpkins started as a hobby four years ago in Ohio. I had some time to kill in October, so I took to carving Jack O’Lanterns. When I posted my works on social media, mainly Disney Princesses and cartoon characters to begin, people started to inquire if I was selling my work. Well, it was only a matter of time before [Brent Pumpkins](#) was open for business!

Q: Did you always possess solid knife skills?

A: I’ve always been able to draw. Growing up, I sketched cartoons and famous faces. So, I guess I just took those skills to the pumpkin and started to take to sculpting and negative space.

Q: When did you know you could take this business beyond Ohio?

A: My first year carving, I entered a local pumpkin carving competition and won, it was for a Craft Beer week in Ohio, and my pumpkin had the Disney Princess Elsa from “Frozen” trying to drink a beer. Except she couldn’t because she accidentally froze it. Then, I carved probably 30 to 40 pumpkins my first year for personal orders. Since then, I have brought my seasonal business to the Big Apple.



Heuser made a name for himself carving Lady Gaga pumpkins. INSTAGRAM @BRENTPUMPKINS

Q: Do you have any favorite designs?

A: Some of my favorites are definitely my [Lady Gaga pumpkins](#). My first year I carved Lady Gaga's character from "American Horror Story Hotel" that got a lot of social media attention. All the Little Monsters on Twitter were retweeting like crazy. The following year in NYC I carved the cover of Lady Gaga's album "Joanne," as it was just releasing. I decided to drop it off to her family's restaurant (with the same name Joanne Trattoria) on the Upper West Side, and they were blown away. They ended up using the pumpkin as a centerpiece for her album release party at Joanne Trattoria. Her father ended up ordering another pumpkin of his Joanne Tattoo that I brought to the restaurant the same year.

Q: What makes pumpkin art different than other types of art besides using pumpkins, of course?

A: I think there's something charming and magical about pumpkin art. Even in photos, you can't thoroughly capture the moment; it's something you have to see in person. Seeing kids and adults alike look at the Jack-o'-lanterns and just smile, mesmerized by how a piece of art can illuminate an otherwise regular squash, is probably why I do what I do. Though they may eventually wither, there's something so cool about capturing a moment in time when it was a beautiful piece of art.

For more information, visit thehighlinehotel.com/pumpkincarving. To reserve a pumpkin portrait session, visit eventbrite.com or email pumpkins@thehighlinehotel.com.

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