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*Trick or Treat!*

October 2009

If you have children - or maybe you're children at heart - then you already know what day is just around the corner - Halloween! However, if you have small kids, or are concerned about trick-or-treating safety, you have more options than just wrapping them in reflective tape and hoping they don't get "egged." Check out your local mall to see if they are having a "Mall-O-Ween." Your kids can go from store to store getting candy, in a safe environment with lots of other families around to enjoy it with.



This year while you're getting your little ones ready, keep in mind that Halloween does have to be just about them. The "Trick or Treat for UNICEF" campaign began in Philadelphia in 1950. So in the midst of the candy and costumes, your kids can help raise money for a great cause. Follow [this link](#) for information on ordering donation boxes, or create your own by downloading a canister wrapper.

Happy spooking and eating! - The Gersky's Staff

**Holiday Profile**  
**Halloween**

Halloween is not your average holiday - far from it. While the holiday we celebrate today is distinctly secular, Halloween's origins are anything but. The ancient Celtic festival of Samhain provides for of the genesis of some of our Halloween traditions. The festival, also called the "Celtic New Year," celebrated the end of the harvest season, and they believed that on October 31st the boundary between the living and the dead dissolved, causing problems for people. The Celts prepared for this festival by lighting bonfires and burning livestock bones, as well as wearing costumes and masks in an attempt to ease the evil spirits.



The name Halloween is actually a shortened form of All Hallows' Even (or All Hallows' Eve), which is the night before All Saints' Day, a holiday rich in pagan tradition throughout northern Europe. The Christians came in to the picture in the 9th Century, and formally moved All Saint's Day from May 13th to November 1st.

The images we now associate with Halloween are an amalgamation of these sources, plus the last hundred years of Gothic and horror fiction, as well as the work of filmmakers and artists.

We're not suggesting you roast any cow bones this Halloween. But perhaps you'll take some time this year to think about the history of this holiday as you're preparing to make your home spooktacular. It's not all about the candy, no matter what your kids say.

### All About... Pumpkins

What's one of the first signs that fall is near? The arrival of pumpkins at your local grocery store or farm stand of course. Pumpkins (or *Cucurbita Cucurbitaceae*) have become synonymous with not just the arrival of fall, but are a mainstay through Halloween and all the way to Thanksgiving. Though a member of the squash-gourd family, the pumpkin actually gets its name from the Greek word *pepon*, which means "large melon." It wasn't until after the French and the British put their linguistic twists on *pepon* that we arrive at the American- English's "pumpkin."



Here in the United States, about 1.5 billion pounds of pumpkins are produced each year, coming mostly from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and California. And with the average pumpkin weighing in at 13.5 pounds, that's about 111 million pumpkins destined for front steps, kitchen tables, and so much more.

Speaking of the kitchen, there's more to be made than just the eponymous pumpkin pie. The pumpkin can be used much like its squash cousins in a variety of soups as well as roasted whole. Even the seeds of the pumpkin can be roasted and made into a healthy snack. And if you're looking for something out of the ordinary, check out our recipe below for a *pumpkin crème brûlée*.

Whether your pumpkin's destination is the dessert table or the carving table, don't be afraid to experiment. There's bound to be a few million more pumpkins in your area.

### "How To:" Clean Out a Pumpkin

Carving the perfect pumpkin is a Halloween essential. But before you can begin carving out your spookiest face, you need to properly clean out your pumpkin - and we all know how awkward that can be. Check out the video below for some great tips on getting your pumpkin ready.



### Recipe of the Month Pumpkin Crème Brûlée



**Ingredients:**

1/4 cup pumpkin puree  
 1 1/2 cups heavy cream  
 1/2 cup whole milk  
 4 egg yolks  
 1/2 cup granulated sugar  
 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon  
 1/8 teaspoon fresh nutmeg  
 1/3 cup superfine or raw sugar

**To Make:**

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Over medium heat, bring the cream, milk, cinnamon, and nutmeg to a boil. Remove from the heat and set aside. In a bowl whisk together the egg yolks and granulated sugar. When the cream mixture has cooled slightly (about 15 minutes), gradually incorporate it into the eggs. **WORK SLOWLY TO AVOID COOKING THE EGGS WITH THE WARM CREAM MIXTURE.** Once all the cream has been mixed in, whisk in the pumpkin until smooth.

Pout the mix into 4 oven-safe ramekins and arrange in a baking pan with about 1 inch of warm water. Bake 30-40 minutes until the custard is mostly set but still jiggles around edges. Remove the ramekins from the water bath and let cool to room temperature. Once cooled, cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

When you are ready to serve, cover the custards with the superfine or raw sugar. Caramelize the sugar with a kitchen torch, or place the ramekins under the broiler for a few minutes. Broiler times will vary, so be sure to check your ramekins every 60-90 seconds so that your sugar is browned, not burned.

Serves 4.

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