

## ***Food Network: The Secret Life of Halloween***

### **About This Special**

Halloween! When candy is appetizer, entree and dessert. In this “spooky” special, host Jim O’Connor discovers the trick behind making Halloween’s most famous treat—those tasty, tri-colored kernels of candy corn. But behind the mask, Halloween also has a grown-up menu: a medieval cake that was the very first Halloween treat, and the tempting delights of Mexico’s feast for Day of the Dead. And believe it or not, there’s a way to dress up a very healthy meal and make it scary enough for Halloween.

### **Vocabulary**

- Paganism
- Celtic
- Samhain
- Antioxidant
- Crusader
- Vandalism

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Ask students to share their favorite Halloween traditions, foods and customs. Compare answers to find both common and unique traditions and customs.
2. Do students know the origins of any of the customs they shared in the previous question? Before watching the special, have students share what they know about the origin of the customs below:
  - a. Candy corn
  - b. Trick or treating
  - c. Wearing costumes
  - d. Pumpkins
3. How do students imagine that the holiday has changed since its inception? Have them consider changes in popularity, decorations, costumes, traditions and celebrations.

### **Suggested Activities**

#### **The History of Halloween (Social Studies, Language Arts, Technology)**

The episode is filled with information about the origins of some of the most popular Halloween traditions, customs and foods, including the beginnings of Halloween itself. Often there are conflicting views on the actual origins of some of these traditions. Ask students why there might be conflicting information, encouraging them to think about people’s different viewpoints and allegiances, as well as the validity and credibility of different sources. Have the class create a list of Halloween traditions, customs and foods. Then have student groups select five of the things from their list to research. Challenge them to learn the origin of their selections, even if the information conflicts with the video. Have them source their information. Then have the groups compare information. Did different groups find conflicting information? If so, how can students determine which information is correct? Suggested Web sites include <http://www.history.com/minisites/halloween>, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halloween>, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/halloween1.html>, [http://www.halloween.com/history\\_halloween.php](http://www.halloween.com/history_halloween.php) and <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/RefArticle.aspx?refid=761572079>.

#### **Halloween Dinner, Anyone? (Consumer Science, Health, Technology, Language Arts)**

The Secret Life of Halloween shares several delicious (and healthy) Halloween recipes. Have student groups imagine that they are chefs who have been asked to design a menu for a famous person’s Halloween dinner party. Challenge them to choose their famous host and to design a menu for his or her party. The guest list can be for 5 or 50 and the menu should include

appetizers, main dish, two side dishes, a beverage and at least two desserts. The menu should reflect the likely tastes of the guests and host. For instance, a dinner party hosted by President Bush likely would have different foods than a dinner party hosted by Miley Cyrus! At least one of the menu options should use ingredients that would be considered “healthy.” Students might want to start their menu research at [http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/et\\_hd\\_halloween](http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/et_hd_halloween).

### **Safety First (Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts)**

Students learn in the episode that, during the 1930s, city leaders nationwide observed that distributing candy during Halloween reduced vandalism. Have students discuss this observation, sharing their own opinions about the reasons behind it and its validity today. What might be the current impact of not giving out candy on Halloween? Do students believe that vandalism would still be a problem? Why or why not? Have students list other safety concerns related to Halloween. These could include children being hit by cars, unsafe candy or food, costume hazards, children trick or treating at stranger’s homes and Halloween-related pranks. Challenge students to design and implement strategies for keeping the community’s children safe on Halloween. Strategies might include a bulletin board at the local grocery store, poster campaign, special Web site or a brochure that could be distributed to all residents.

### **Extensions**

Not all children can afford to celebrate Halloween as others do. Some may not be able to afford a costume. Others may have parents who work in the evenings, preventing them from taking children trick or treating. Still others may have parents from other countries who are not familiar with our country’s customs.. Have students select one of the issues above or a specific Halloween-related issue that prevents someone in your community from enjoying or experiencing Halloween. Then have them determine a way that they can help and give of themselves in the true spirit of the holiday.