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Ask the Experts: Favorite Halloween Treats

by [Toby Amidor](#) in [Ask the Experts](#), [Halloween](#) [Comments \(3\)](#)



As a registered dietitian, my philosophy is to embrace holidays like Halloween without going overboard. This means allowing my children to go trick-or-treating and indulge in SOME treats. I'm not the only nutrition expert with this philosophy—I spoke to top experts around the country who weighed in on their favorite Halloween treats.

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Ding Dong at the Dietitian's House

Nutrition consultant [Alexandra Oppenheimer, MS, RD](#) claims "It's not all apples and raisins at my house; I do give out candy but purchase ones that have some redeeming qualities. When picking out my Halloween offerings, I choose chocolates with nuts like peanuts or almonds and skip the sugary caramel. I choose chocolates (and lean towards the darker varieties) because of the potential heart-health benefits and antioxidants. In addition, they also provide fiber, protein and calcium. For these reasons, I prefer passing out chocolates versus candies made completely out of sugar with little to no other nutrients. Although plain chocolates and those with nuts do contribute nutrients, it's important to remember they are still a treat and should be eaten in moderation."

Simple and Delicious

[Illyse Schapiro, MS, RD, CDN](#) a dietitian in private practice in Westchester, NY and New York City says "Popcorn is a great treat anytime but it is particular fun to hand out during Halloween... even for a dietitian. Look for individual 100-150 calorie packages that are low in fat and sodium (not drenched in butter and salt). Recently many nutritional benefits have been found in relation to popcorn. It is a

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healthy treat, rich in antioxidants and fiber and always a crowd pleaser!”

Do-It-Yourself

DIY treats are the latest rage and nutrition experts agree! Making your own treats allows you to control the ingredients and minimize the preservatives.

D. Milton Stokes, PhD, MPH, RD, an assistant professor of nutrition at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, CT says “a favorite treat that’s easy to make and quite filling is rice crispy squares,” while nutrition consultant **Becky Purcell, MS, RD, CDN** suggests making your own dark chocolate covered pretzel rods as a healthier alternative to store-bought candy.

Get *Ellie’s Crispy Rice Treats* recipe.
Get my recipe for *Chocolate-Covered Pretzel Sticks*

New York City nutritionist and founder of **Middleberg Nutrition**, **Stephanie Middlerberg, MS, RD, CDN** shared her recipe for No-Bake Trail Mix. “In a mixing bowl, combine pumpkin seeds, dried apples, pistachio nuts, dried cranberries, coconut slivers (chocolate chips and seasoned popcorn optional). Portion into snack-size gift bags (about a fist full) and tie with a ribbon.” However, if your schedule doesn’t allow you to go the DIY route, **Stephanie** recommends **Justin’s Organic Peanut Butter Cups** as a store-bought alternative.

Culinary Nutritionist at SPE Certified Natalia Hancock, RD says “my favorite treat to give out at Halloween is **Spiced Carrot Cupcakes**. I tweaked a traditional carrot cake to lower the calories and increase the nutrient density but most importantly maintained the taste, flavor and texture. They are easily wrapped in seasonal cellophane and tied with twine or ribbon.”

Embrace Fall Pumpkins

Pumpkin was a popular answer among two nutrition experts. Director of Wellness at **Next Jump, Inc.** **Marissa Beck, MS, RD** explained “One of my favorite Halloween treats originates from a family pumpkin-carving tradition. We’d roast pumpkin seeds after the carve and serve them by the fire. As a kid, we surely loved the candy got while out trick-or-treating, but since we also made a big deal about roasting pumpkin seeds, we were just as excited to dig out every last seed we could find from our jack-o-lanterns. To this day, we associate Halloween with eating pumpkin seeds and sitting by the fire with family.” Here’s how **Marissa** roasts pumpkin seeds:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line a baking sheet with foil, canola oil and a sprinkle of sea salt.
2. Toss pumpkin seeds with the oil and salt.
3. Roast in the oven at 350 degrees until crisp.
4. Cool on the stove and enjoy.

Frances Largeman-Roth, RD, author of the New York Times best seller *The CarbLovers Diet* and author of *Feed the Belly: The Pregnant Mom’s Healthy Eating Guide* is a pumpkin-lover too. She says “Pumpkin is loaded with beta-carotene and the shelled seeds, or pepitas, contain **fiber, zinc** and **selenium**. I make muffins using 1 cup of canned pumpkin puree plus two mashed bananas and it replaces all of the butter or oil and the muffins are still moist and delicious. I also use pumpkin seeds to make my Hippy Chick Granola.” (*recipe below*)



Hippy-Chick Granola

Prep: 8 minutes

Cook: 23 minutes



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Makes 6 cups of granola (12, 1/3-cup servings)

- 2 cups old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup oat bran flakes
- ¼ cup slivered almonds
- ¼ cup roasted pumpkin seeds
- ¼ cup dried currants or raisins
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup dried tart cherries
- ¼ cup flax seeds
- ½ cup honey
- 1/3 cup (5 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a baking sheet or jelly roll pan with cooking spray; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the bran flakes, oats, almonds, pumpkin seeds, currants, cranberries, cherries, and flax seeds. Set aside.

In a small bowl, combine the honey and melted butter, and pour over the oat and fruit mixture. Stir with a wooden spoon until combined.

Spread mixture onto the prepared pan, and bake for 23 minutes or until golden. Cool on the pan, and break into pieces with a spatula. Store in an airtight container (I like a glass jar) for up to a week.

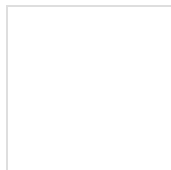
Calories 228; Fat 10 g (Sat 4 g, Mono 1 g, Poly 0 g); Cholesterol 13 mg; Protein 5 g; Carbohydrate 30 g; Sugars 16 g; Fiber 3 g; Iron 1 mg; Sodium 7 mg; Calcium 22 mg; Folate 3 mcg; Beta-Carotene 104 mcg; Potassium 21 mg

TELL US: What's your favorite Halloween treat?

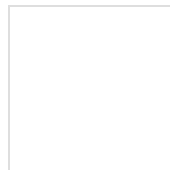
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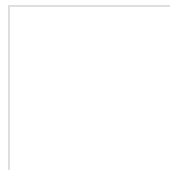
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