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It's that time of year again! Halloween! There are pumpkins on the doorstep and mountains of candy on display in the supermarket. With the big event only a few days away, it's time to put the final touches on your costume. I am a big fan of costumes. Dress-up was my favorite game as a kid. Unfortunately, I lack the eccentricity, or may it's the chutzpah, to wear a costume every day so Halloween is an opportunity to show my true colors.

I was a roly-poly pumpkin on my first trick-or-treat adventure. Although it was a hand-me-down from my sister, I was adorable and wore it again the next year. For kindergarten, I insisted that it was time for a change. Over the next few years, I bounced from witch to fairy princess and back again. Such a dilemma, I really preferred the fluff and froth of a princess dress but felt that a witch was more appropriate for Halloween.

As I progressed through elementary school, I did the ghost thing and spent a good part of the evening tripping over the bed sheet. Once was enough and for the next go around, I borrowed a peewee football uniform from a kid down the street. Entering the 'tween years, I followed the crowd and was hobo like the rest of the sixth graders.

Much to my chagrin, in middle school I discovered that only little kids trick-or-treated. In mourning, I spent the evening in civilian clothes passing out candy to my brother and his friends. Ah but the allure of Halloween night was strong. Even a few years were too many for passing out miniature peanut butter cups. It was time to get back into a costume.

It was a difficult sale and, with only one exception, my friends weren't buying. Most weren't dorky enough to dress up. Or maybe, just maybe, they weren't brave enough. In their defense, trick-or-treating teenagers were considered no better than beggars or panhandlers and usually sent away empty-handed.

In spite of all that, my friend Wendy and I decided to brave the elements and the ire of our neighbors. Riding the school bus on Halloween morning, we hatched a simple but brilliant plan. We'd defy convention and make ourselves welcome with costumes so clever that no one could resist us.

Channeling Archie Bunker, I put on one of my dad's shirts and stuffed it with a pillow to cut a portly figure. I added a tie and tweedy jacket. To complete my ensemble, I donned a baldhead and Clark Kent glasses. With her pillbox hat, white gloves, ratty-tatty coat and elastic stockings, Wendy was the perfect partner.

Since we got an admittedly late start, most everyone had run out of candy by the time we started knocking. Although our take for the evening was almost nonexistent, we had a ball. Instead of reprimanding us for trick-or-treating at the ripe old age of sixteen, our neighbors thought we were the funniest things they'd seen all day. Many invited us in and called the rest of their family away from ball games and sitcoms to take our pictures.



Have a fun Halloween and bon appétit!

Susan

Pumpkin & Spice Cookies

'Tis the season to cook with pumpkin! Bake up a batch of pumpkin and spice cookies for your favorite trick-or-treaters and enjoy!

Makes 3+ dozen cookies

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ginger
Pinch nutmeg
Pinch allspice
Pinch cloves
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter at room temperature
1 cup brown sugar
1 large egg
1 1/2 cups (15 ounce can) pure pumpkin puree



Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Put the flour, salt, baking soda, baking powder and spices in a bowl and whisk to combine. Set aside.

Using an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the egg and pumpkin puree and beat until smooth. With the mixer on low speed, slowly add the dry ingredients and mix until just combined.

Using a small cookie scoop or tablespoon, drop spoonfuls of dough onto baking sheets about 1-1/2 inches apart. Bake the cookies for 10 minutes, turn the baking sheets and continue baking until puffed and golden, 5-10 minutes more. Remove the cookies from the pan and cool on wire racks.

Spread a dollop of Spiced Cream Cheese Frosting on the cookies and serve.

Spiced Cream Cheese Frosting

2 cups confectioners' sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ginger
4 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
2 tablespoons butter, at room temperature
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Sift together the confectioners' sugar and spices. Set aside.

Put the cream cheese and butter in a bowl and beat at medium speed until smooth. Gradually add the confectioners' sugar and beat until creamy.

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