

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Avoid the REALLY SCARY Halloween Monsters

If they haven't come knocking yet, the trick-or-treating little monsters and princesses will be arriving tonight. They'll be cute, scary, pretty, and pretty ugly. But you know how to handle them - pass around the candy and they'll be happy. The bigger question is: Do you know how to handle the tiny little monsters that you can't see? The food poisoning bugs? Beyond stocking up on bags of candy, here are some other tips for safe holiday celebrations from Monster Mash to Princess Proms.

Perishable foods need to be kept cold all the time. With our warm weather Halloweens, that can often mean less than 1 hour at room temperature. It's a 2 hour time limit only if the air temperature is below 90° F. The tricky part is remembering what counts as perishable foods. Sure, meat, chicken, fish and milk are perishable. You knew that! You knew macaroni and potato salads are too. But do you count vegetable trays and sliced fruit as perishable? They are!

If you're serving veggie trays with dip, or bowls of sliced apples and pears to dip into caramel sauce or hot chocolate, they need to be kept *cold*. An easy way to do this is to fill a bowl half full of chopped ice and nestle the plate of veggies or the bowl of fruit slices down into the ice. If you buy a ready-made tray of cut produce, take off the lid, flip it over, and fill it with ice. Put the tray on top of the ice, and your food is ready!

Other perishables that most of us don't think of are cider and fruit juices. They need to be kept chilled as well. Local orange juice can be freshly squeezed, but still must be kept refrigerated. If you're buying juice or cider it really needs to be pasteurized, not raw. Fresh fruits can carry *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and other bacteria, just naturally from the soil and air. When fruit is squeezed the bacteria are there, and juice is basically one huge sugar banquet for them. They'll grow like crazy! Pasteurization will kill them without cooking the juice, so use it. And keep juices chilled.

An easy and pretty way to keep juices and punch chilled without diluting them is to make an ice ring of juice in advance. Use a cake pan, bundt pan, gelatin mold or any container that will fit easily into your serving bowl. Put a thin layer of juice or cider in the pan and freeze it. When it's firm,

arrange sliced or chopped fruit on the ice and add enough juice to cover it, but not so much that it floats. Freeze this. Then add enough juice to fill the pan and freeze the whole thing. At serving time dip the pan into warm water to release the ice, then slide it fruit-side up into the serving bowl of beverage.

Of course, if you're serving hot mulled cider no ice is required, but keeping it hot is! Use a slow cooker set on low, or an insulated thermos that you replenish with hot cider regularly.

One last reminder about risky foods - raw eggs. Oh, you don't eat raw eggs? Good! But do you take a fingerful of brownie batter, taste the scrap of cookie dough that didn't make it into the oven, or lick the spatula clean when you're done? If you're making holiday treats and the recipes include raw eggs, don't taste them until they're baked! Teach the children you have helping you to not put their fingers in their mouths while they're cooking. The baking will get rid of the bacteria, no doubt about it. But until the dough or batter hits 155° F, it is risky.

Here's an easy pumpkin 'pie' that saves you several hundred calories and lots of saturated fat per slice by eliminating the crust. It has milk and raw eggs, so any leftovers (if there are!) will need to be refrigerated. If you want to start with your own cooked pumpkin or plain sweet potato, you will need 2 cups, mashed. Have a safe and Happy Halloween!

#### Crustless Pumpkin Pie

2 eggs	1 cup evaporated fat-free milk
1 16-oz can pumpkin or sweet potato	2/3 cup packed brown sugar
¼ cup all purpose or whole wheat flour	2 tsp pumpkin pie spice*
pinch of salt if desired	

Topping: whipped topping, thawed, and pecan halves

Preheat oven to 350° F. Coat a 9 inch pie plate with cooking spray. If using sweet potatoes, mash until smooth. Beat eggs in large bowl. Add all ingredients except for topping. Pour into pie plate. Bake 45 min, or until knife inserted into center comes out clean. Remove from oven, cool on wire rack at least 10 minutes. If making in advance, cool 1 hour, then refrigerate. To serve, make a circle of whipped topping around outside edge, then lay a circle of pecan halves on the topping. Serves 8-10.

\*Make your own pumpkin pie spice by mixing 1 tsp ground cinnamon, ½ tsp ground ginger, ¼ tsp ground nutmeg and ¼ tsp ground cloves.

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