

Peter Piper Picked A Pumpkin

For some people, getting a Halloween pumpkin means making a quick stop at a supermarket.

For others, it means spending a Saturday with the family at a pumpkin patch, an event as traditional as choosing a Christmas tree.

Kathryn Howard, who came to the pumpkin patch at Detering Orchards in Harrisburg with her family, her friends and a camera, has made the trip each October for the past several years.

"I think it's a wonderful tradition," Howard said, while watching her two-year-old son, Joshua, playing in a pile of leaves. "They say in this day and age — when the family is deteriorating — that it's good to have traditions like this. And it's so beautiful out here."

With its acres of apple trees, pumpkins and brightly colored leaves scattered on the farm, Detering Orchards is a favorite place for young and old. People come back not just for a pumpkin, but to enjoy the atmosphere, eat caramel apples and taste the homemade apple cider that Roger Detering provides his customers.

"We do this every single year," said Miffy Davis, watching her three children trying to find the perfect pumpkin. "This is something my kids were waiting for —

to get their pumpkins here."

Davis' children weren't alone in their anticipation to visit the pumpkin patch. So many schoolchildren want to get their pumpkins at the orchard that Detering had to turn some of them away.

"We have 4,000 kindergartners who come in October," said Detering, of the kids who come for free tours of the pumpkin patch. "We used to have it for upper grades, too, but there just got to be too many of them."

"They were coming year after year, so we kind of limit it to kindergartners as much as possible — other than the handicapped, or the elderly," he said.

Detering, who plants the pumpkins in May to prepare for the season, has given free tours of the pumpkin patch for almost 30 years. Not only does each child get to take home a free pumpkin, but the tours are also educational, he said.

"We take the kids out to pick an apple, and we talk about the apple trees — how they need the sunshine and the rain to grow," he said.

"Then, we go into the pumpkin patch and talk about what the pumpkins are good for, rather than just saying, 'There's the pumpkin patch,' or 'There's



Photo by Kim Nguyen
Detering Orchards in Harrisburg is a favorite spot for pumpkin-picking people.

the apples."

What Detering enjoys most is seeing the excitement of young children, he said.

"Kids enjoy being out in the field and picking their own — doing something themselves," he said. "A lot of them don't even know if pumpkins grow on a tree, or on the ground, or where it comes from. They're excited to learn."

Watching the kids' expressions is



Photo by Kim Nguyen
Two-year-old Ethan Abramowitz wades through a sea of pumpkins in search of the perfect carving subject. The occasion marked Ethan's first visit to a pumpkin patch.

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Origins of Halloween nothing to celebrate

The crisp smell of autumn is in the air, and with it comes the scent of freshly carved pumpkins, long burning candles and an evening where spirits rise to partake in a festival of fun and fright.

For centuries we have celebrated October under a hacked up bed-sheet, a witch's hat and an attitude of mischief and mysticism that originated from ancient Druid ceremonies.

Halloween, meaning "holy eve" is so named because it was the night before "All Hallows" or "All Saints Day" on Nov. 1.

All Saints Day began in the Seventh and Eighth century to honor dead saints during the increased spread of Christianity. However the rites of the preceding evening, now known as Halloween, really stem from a pagan religion called Druidism.

Long before Christianity spread to northern and western Europe, a group of people known as Celts roamed the land. Their religion, Druidism, centered around nature and the great sun god. However, the Druids also honored another, not so friendly god, who ventured out the last evening in October to wreak terror in the hearts of these ancient people.

This god called, fittingly enough, The Lord of Death, allowed the spirits of those who had died during the past 12 months to spend one last evening of placidity among mortal life.

The Lord of Death allowed the spirits to finish off anything that had not been finished before their death because Oct. 31 was the Druid's New Year's Eve. This holiday signaled the end of summer and the beginning of winter because it followed the last harvest of the year. Thus their new year began on Nov. 1 similar to our Jan. 1.

This special night was not at all like our light-hearted Halloween celebration, however. For the Druids, Halloween was a dangerous night of evil spirits, witches and goblins who's victims could weave a tale far more spooky than any of our contemporary ghost stories.

To ward off the evil spirits and appease the Lord of Death

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