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WEEKEND BREAK



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HALLOWEEN

TRADITIONS THROUGH THE CENTURIES



Photos by Ron Baldwin

A girl holds up her chosen pumpkin at a pumpkin patch.



'Jimmy Jim,' with makeup by Kathy Patenaude.



A girl holds up a pumpkin.

Exploring the holiday's trends and history

By RON BALDWIN

Like other busy people, most years I forget it's Halloween and fail to obtain a giant bag of those overly-sweet, little loaves of chocolate and sugar we call candy bars. I usually fly to the supermarket and grab the last bag of candy on the shelf at four in the afternoon on Halloween.

Occasionally, I've stopped by the local wholesale grocery and purchased a couple boxes of Halloween gold: full size candy bars. I've found that handing out full size bars on Halloween garners me a certain neighborhood caché that is otherwise unobtainable — while some neighborhood kids just ignore adults, after you've handed out Halloween gold, they take notice.

"Hi, Mister B. Almost Halloween, huh?"

The breakdown

Let's weigh a few facts so we don't get carried away with all the holiday enthusiasm. According to the National Confectioners Association, contrary to the widely perceived decline in the numbers of trick-or-treaters, the practice is still alive and growing in English speaking countries across the world. Halloween candy sales have doubled since 2005. In the U.S., 90% of households

buy Halloween candy (a whopping \$2.6 billion worth), 70% purchase home décor and another 70% buy costumes. This all adds up to \$9 billion in Halloween retail sales in America alone.

America's trick-or-treat habits have changed somewhat over the years. Some may encounter trunk or treating, a newer fab in which a group of people (usually moms) steer their cars to a big parking lot (usually in the suburbs), form a circle with the trunks pointing inward and open the trunks full of candy, where the children go from car to car trick-or-treating. In less populated areas of the country, local businesses, shopping malls and even churches have organized trick-or-treat activities.

Halloween through history

On the history side, the timeline of Halloween flows like the mists of time through the British Isles, particularly with the Celts. The Celts believed that on the eve of "Samhain" (pronounced sow-win), the spirit world was able to contact and inhabit the physical world. Rather than a celebration, this holiday was a serious, somber affair. People dressed in animal skins, invoking the spirits of the dead against enemies, and huge bonfires were set aflame to ward off ghosts. This yearly event formed the basis for the holiday we celebrate today.

The holiday would likely have disappeared into antiquity, had it not been for two popes. The Romans had almost conquered all the Isles by the time Pope Bonaventure IV created All Martyrs Day on May 13.

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