

# Halloween Options For Rural Areas

Halloween is enjoyed by millions of children (and adults) every year.

It conjures up images of costumed creatures parading through the neighborhood collecting their bounty of candy booty.

The tradition of going door to door for loot is fine and good for those who live in residential neighborhoods where homes are

in close proximity.

But what do the children who live in sparsely populated rural areas do? They can enjoy Halloween Tailgating.

Halloween Tailgating, also known by Trunk-or-Treating or Tailgate Trick-or-Treat, is the concept of gathering together in one central location for a candy exchange and social event.

The central location may be a store parking lot, one person's house, or at a park or schoolyard.

Costumed children move from car to car to show off their costume and receive candy and other treats in exchange.

This Halloween form of tailgating probably won't ever replace traditional trick-or-treating, but it presents a viable option for those who find their proximity to others makes trick-or-treating inconvenient or even hazardous.

To start your own Halloween Tailgating traditions, here are some tips for a safe and enjoyable event.

\* Elect an event organizer. He or she will be responsible for getting the word out about the Halloween event and meeting spot.

This person can also reach out to town officials to see if it can be a larger community event.

\* Choose a safe meeting spot that is well-lit.

Remember that due to daylight savings time it gets dark rather early in October.

So if the tailgating will take place on a weekday after school, it's best to be prepared for when

the sun sets.

A playground or athletic field may have lights that automatically come on in the evening. A shopping mall parking lot may even be a safer bet.

\* Encourage participants to get into the Halloween spirit by decorating the hoods and trunks of their vehicles with autumnal decorations.

Someone can be in charge of music, and plug an MP3 player into their car stereo or blast some Halloween music from the CD player.

Battery-powered lanterns or even wired lights can be used. Auto-supply stores sell a converter that will change the AC current of your car's battery power to DC to plug-in lights and other electronics.

\* Encourage participants to bring folding chairs and their own refreshments.

The tailgating can last longer than the mere minutes of the candy exchange and costume parade with planning.

\* Never leave children alone at these events. It's much more fun, not to mention safe if adults participate.



In some rural areas, door-to-door trick-or-treating is not practical or safe. Halloween Tailgating can be a solution for the community.

## Halloween Safety Tips For Kids

For kids, few days are as fun or as highly anticipated as Halloween. For parents, the day is one of mixed emotions. While they love to see their kids have the fun that's typical of Halloween, there are also safety concerns surrounding the holiday.

While it might not entirely stop parental worrying until the kids come back home with their bounty of sweets, the following safety tips should help parents get the most fun out of Halloween.

\* Choose a safe costume. When it comes to kids and Halloween costumes, getting kids to choose safe costumes can be tough. After all, kids want to be their favorite superhero or movie character and aren't really worried about how safe those costumes are (or aren't). When choosing a Halloween costume, be sure that it's fire-resistant. Because many people have lit jack-o-lanterns on their porch around Halloween, a fire-resistant costume is an absolute necessity.

It's also important to choose a costume with significant eye holes. Oftentimes, Halloween falls on a school day, and kids are out trick-or-treating in the twilight hours, which is arguably the worst time for drivers and kids alike when it comes to how well they can see. Therefore, a costume must provide kids with adequate peripheral vision so they can see approaching traffic.

\* Remind kids about strangers. Even older trick-or-treaters might let their guard down on Halloween. Kids will be ringing doorbells at homes where they

don't know the residents, so parents should go over the basics, such as not entering the homes or vehicles of any people the kids and their parents don't both know, before kids head out to get their candy. It's also a good idea for parents to give kids a cell phone when they head out, just in case something happens and kids need to call home. This will keep trick-or-treaters from knocking on a stranger's door and asking to use their phone, and will enable kids to call home if they feel they're not safe.

\* Don't light jack-o-lanterns. While it might seem to go against Halloween tradition, a lit jack-o-lantern is a big safety hazard. Kids often crowd onto porches in bunches when trick-or-treating, and that increases the chance a costume could catch fire. If you must light a jack-o-lantern, light it with a light bulb that can be plugged in.

\* Have chaperones whenever possible. As previously mentioned, Halloween typically falls on a weekday, which means kids will be out patrolling the neighborhood for candy after school. That makes it hard for families, many of which consist of two working parents, to arrange for chaperones for trick-or-treating. If possible, take the afternoon off from work to go along with your kids. If you can't do that, find a babysitter or the parent of a child's friend to accompany everyone around the neighborhood. Halloween is not as safe as it once was, so taking extra precautions is entirely necessary.

## The Sweet History Of Chocolate Told

Chocolate treats are a favorite worldwide. Holidays such as Halloween see chocolate consumption go through the roof, as sweet snacks are the centerpiece of these occasions.

The average American consumes 10 to 12 pounds of chocolate per year, and residents of Switzerland, one of the top chocolate-producing regions of the world, consume a whopping 21 pounds of chocolate each year.

When enjoyed in moderation, chocolate can actually have health benefits. Research has indicated that dark chocolate is high in antioxidants, those nutritional elements responsible for fending off diseases in the body. Therefore treating your valentine to chocolate will be good for his or her heart in both the physical and romantic sense. Also, chocolate is known to be a mood-booster. Chemicals in chocolate affect levels of the body's mood-affecting

chemicals, including serotonin, endorphins, and phenylethylamine.

The sweet confection that most enjoy and know today as chocolate is very different from the chocolate of the past. Chocolate comes from the cacao bean, which grows on a tropical evergreen called the cacao tree. These trees are very delicate and often do not produce fruit until 4 to 5 years of age. It is surmised that the world was introduced to cacao when Christopher Columbus first visited the Americas and brought back samples of cacao beans, but explorer Hernando Cortez was instrumental in creating the commercial fever associated with chocolate.

During his conquest of Mexico, Cortez witnessed local Aztec Indians using cacao beans in the preparation of a drink used in royal celebrations. Emperor Montezuma was reported to drink

50 or more servings of this chocolate brew per day, and regularly served it as a regal drink in golden goblets to guests. It was thought to be a drink of the gods. However, the drink was very bitter and not readily enjoyed by the Spanish. To make the beverage more palatable, Cortez imagined sweetening it with sugar cane. When Cortez brought the cacao back to Spain, the concoction underwent more changes to fit the tastes of the citizens.

Eventually cacao spread to Europe, where different people experimented with extracting ingredients from the beans to make different chocolate products. Beans were pressed to extract the cacao butter, a fat that occurs naturally in the beans. Chocolate became smoother and the chocolate beverage became more like the flavor known today. Solid eating chocolate was developed in England in 1847 and replaced

the coarse, grainy variety that dominated the market. However, it wasn't until 1876 when Daniel Peter in Switzerland developed a way to add milk to the chocolate-making process, giving birth to milk chocolate, that chocolate truly became the product we know today.

Milton Hershey, who invented his own spin on milk chocolate in 1894, played an enormous role in introducing many Americans to the appeal of affordable milk chocolate. The candy giant achieved great fame with mass-produced chocolate bars. In 1907 Hershey's trademark Hershey's Kisses were introduced, even further entwining the notion of chocolate with romance. The familiar paper tails that peak outside of the kisses were introduced in 1924 to distinguish the Hershey variety from imitators who were cropping up at this time.

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