



Healthy Halloween Party Ideas

When October rolls around, I think of shorter days, pumpkin bread and Halloween, which marks the beginning of a sugar overload all the way to January. It's a challenging time for parents who have worked diligently to provide healthy meals and don't want to risk all of their efforts being wiped out by a barrage of unhealthy choices promoted by TV advertising, school parties and junk food brought to school during the holiday season.

The good news is there are many foods to offer as snacks or bring to school parties that are festive *and* healthy. Some of my favorites are Ghost Bananas, Fruit Cup Pumpkins, Mandarin Orange Pumpkins, and Ghost Hard-boiled Eggs. These snacks are simple to make and work great at home, in lunch bags and for school parties.

Bananas Ghosts: Cut bananas in half; place dried currants, raisins or chocolate chips at the pointed end of each banana for eyes and a mouth; place a dollop of peanut butter (or cream cheese for those with nut allergies) on the flat portion of the banana and stick upright on a plate. Kids think these are great fun.



Fruit Cup Pumpkins: With a black Sharpie draw a jack-o-lantern face on the clear plastic cover of a fruit cup filled with peaches or mandarin oranges. Add it to your child's lunch for a fun surprise.



Ghost Eggs: Place eggs in a pot and fill with water 2 inches above the eggs. Bring to a boil, then turn off heat, cover and let eggs cook 13 minutes. Drain and immerse in ice water for about 10 minutes or until cool. Peel shell, add chocolate chips for eyes and mouth or use a black edible marker to draw the ghost faces.

Mandarin Orange Pumpkins: Peel mandarin orange or clementine and place a piece of cucumber or celery in the center to make a pumpkin (see picture above). If serving the orange unpeeled, draw a jack-o-lantern face on the peel of the orange and add to your child's lunch. It's sure to bring a smile when she opens her lunch bag.



In addition to fun food ideas for school celebrations, you can also encourage your child's teacher to try some fun crafts and activities that promote physical activity to celebrate the holiday. For example, reading and writing Halloween stories or making masks out of paper plates. To help kids burn some extra energy, plan a Halloween Walk-a-thon or costume parade. Suggest teachers change the names of traditional PE games, such as "ghosts & goblins tag" or "capture the pumpkin" (instead of capture the flag).

For more inspiration, check out these websites:

- <http://www.pinterest.com/explore/healthy-halloween-snacks/>
- http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/nutrition/nutrition/life_stages/hgic4112.html
- <http://www.ivillage.com/healthy-halloween-treats-kids-will-love/6-a-128659>
- <http://weissice.com/HalloweenG.htm>

