

**What's Halloween like in rural New Hampshire?** Well except for the coyotes, pretty quiet. Yes, I know. There's plenty going on up on Main Street. But nothing, zip, nada in my neighborhood. Down by Pleasant Lake, we're a mix of year-round and summer people. By mid-October, most of the leaves have faded, it's dark before six and more than half of houses are empty. We are not a hub of Halloween festivities, far from it.

**It was summer and the neighborhood very busy** when I moved into my house several years ago. Up until the Columbus Day, there was still a fair amount of weekend activity. That's when the summer people closed up their cottages. About the same time, the snowbirds disappeared. That said, down at my end of the road, there were a few kids. Not many mind you but enough to know they were there. From time to time, I'd see them with their heavy backpacks on their way to or from the bus.



**Knowing there were kids in the neighborhood,** I dutifully bought a bag of fun-sized Milky Way®. About that name, what's up with that? No not Milky Way, I get that. The candy bar was named after a milkshake. The milkshake was named after the galaxy. Why? Well, the story starts to get murky so that's about all I can tell you.

**No, the part I don't get is why the teeny tiniest candy bars are called fun size.** Where's the fun in these one-bite wonders? Moreover, and please correct me if I'm wrong, those fun size bars seem to be shrinking every year. Who are the candy manufacturers trying to kid?

**The fun moniker would be more appropriate for one of those supersized bars.** I ask you, what's more fun – a teeny tiny drop of chocolate or a big honkin' bar? Come to think of it, a more fitting label might be fun-while-it lasted. Eating one of those giant candies in one sitting is an invitation to a tummy-ache. But hey, you're only a kid once.

**All right, enough digressing,** let's get back to my Halloween preparations. Although I dutifully stocked up on miniature Milky Way® bars, I forgot to stop at the bank. So I went through every pocket and purse for loose change for Unicef. I put on my orange t-shirt, the one with the jack-o-lantern. I tasted a couple of the mini-chocolates. (Only a few, I needed to make sure they were safe for the children.) And I waited. Then, I waited some more. And some more. When it started raining, I figured that was that.

**About eight-thirty, maybe nine o'clock,** I was ready to turn off the outside lights and change out of my silly t-shirt. That's when a car drove in the driveway. What's with that, I thought. The parents on Jackson Road never chauffeured their kids around on Halloween. Rain, sleet or snow, we walked from house to house. However, I didn't judge. Instead, I picked up my bowls of candy and coins and headed to the door.

**Hands in his pockets, a hunched over middle schooler shuffled** through the rain. He didn't shout trick or treat and I was none too sure of his costume. However, I gave him the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps he was going for subtlety – Clark Kent on casual Friday. Beyond the headlights, I could see the driver's silhouette and maybe another person. On second thought, maybe it was a simple ploy by his nitwit older brothers to collect candy. You know – send in the kid. After helping himself to a handful of fun, the boy shuffled back to the car. He was my first, last and only trick or treater.

Hey, wait a minute. Maybe they were lost or Russian spies trying to figure out this bizarre American custom. I'll never know.

Bon appétit!

*Susan*

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## Apple Cookies

*Loaded with fruit, nuts and oatmeal, if you like you can pretend these cookies are good for you. Enjoy!*

Makes about 5 dozen cookies

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup instant oatmeal  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
3/4 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon each ground cinnamon and ginger  
1/4 teaspoon each ground nutmeg and allspice  
1 1/2 sticks butter, at room temperature  
1 cup light brown sugar  
2 large eggs  
1/4 cup sour cream  
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract  
1-2 apples, about 1 cup finely chopped or coarsely grated  
1 cup raisins  
1 cup chopped walnuts  
1 cup chocolate chips

Set 2 racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with silicon liners or parchment paper.

Put the flour, oatmeal, salt, baking powder and soda and spices in a bowl and whisk to combine.

In a large bowl, beat the butter and brown sugar together until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, sour cream and vanilla and beat until smooth. Turn the mixer down to low, gradually add the dry ingredients and beat until just combined. Fold in the apple, raisins, nuts and chocolate chips

Drop tablespoons of dough about 3 inches apart (a mini ice-cream scoop works great) onto the prepared baking sheets. If you like, you can flatten the cookies slightly with moistened fingers. Switching racks and turning the pans midway through baking, bake the cookies until they are lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Let the cookies set for a minute and then transfer to a rack to cool.