

## Side dish

### Ghostly treats

The makers of Oreo tell kids to use their creativity when making Halloween treats, but it offers some tips that we enjoyed.

For example make Witch-faced treats in foil cupcake holders. Use an Oreo cookie as the base of a witch's hat to top off the scary face.

The pointy part of the hat can be made with a chocolate dipped cone shaped corn snack - like Bugles. You can make a crooked witch's



nose with a cashew.  
Here's Oreo's recipe for a marshmallow green witch face.

### WICKED WITCH TREATS

- 12 Halloween Oreo cookies with the orange filling, divided in two batches
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine, melted
- 6 Wilton Brand Halloween foil cupcake baking cups (or regular cupcake baking cups)
- 1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chunks, melted
- 1 jar (7 ounces) marshmallow creme
- 2 cups thawed whipped topping
- Yellow and green icing colors
- 12 lollipop sour candies (like Dots)
- 6 cashews or chocolate-covered cashews
- 1/2 cup miniature semi-sweet chocolate chips
- Wilton brand Halloween Sprinkles

Finely crush six cookies. Mix crumbs and butter. Spread evenly into six paper baking cups placed in muffin pan.

Press crumb mixture firmly onto bottom of liners with the back of a spoon. Set aside. Dip corn snacks into melted chocolate.

Place one corn snack point side up, on each of the remaining Oreos to form a witch's hat.

Mix marshmallow creme and whipped topping with wire whisk until well blended.

Fill with icing color as desired for a green witch's skin.

Spoon about 1/2 cup marshmallow cream mixture over crust in each liner to make the witch's head.

Add two orange candy dots to make the eyes: one cashew for her nose and chocolate chips to form her mouth. Top with hats and add sprinkles for the hair.

Freeze at least two hours, (desserts will not freeze solid.) Makes six.

# Playing with fire

## Hot stuff fuels big chili cookoff

BY KEELY KALESKI  
STAFF WRITER

Why mess with success? Georgia Weller, winner of the seventh annual Great Lakes Regional Chili Cookoff, has been using the same recipe since 1989.

"I've been successful," said Weller, who was cooking beside her husband, Jim, also a prize-winning chili cook, at the event in downtown Plymouth Sunday, Oct. 13.

Weller won the World's Championship Chili Cookoff in Reno, Nev., in 1996. Jim won in 2000.

Winning the Plymouth cookoff qualifies Weller for the 2003 World's Championship Cookoff. She received \$850 and a trophy.

"It's fun, we have a good time, and there are so many nice people," said Weller, explaining why she and her husband compete in chili cookoffs.

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### INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

Her secret ingredient? Salt.

"You've got to use enough salt to keep the flavor," she said. "You want the taste to stay. As the chili cools, the taste changes."

Jim competed in the salsa, red chili and green (Chili Verde) competitions. This year his Chili Verde made the final table at the World Championship Chili Cookoff.

Chili Verde is made with green chilies and white meat, usually pork or chicken. "It's very salty, and very hot," he said. "I like things that are salty and hot."

Fifty-nine cooks from Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio competed in the red chili cookoff, 17 in the Chili Verde competition, and 28 in the salsa competi-

tion.

Jim Stoddard flew in from Coppell, Texas, and competed in the salsa, red and green chili competitions. Jeff Nester of Seymour, Ind., won the Chili Verde competition, \$150 and a trophy.

Tom Lytle of Clinton Township took first prize for salsa and received \$100 and a trophy. Todd Rizzo of Westland placed third in the Chili Verde contest and received a T-shirt as his prize.

Annette Horn, owner of Native West Gallery in downtown Plymouth, and a chili cook, organized the event.

"I expected a dozen people in the Chili Verde competition," she said. "Having 17 was great. Last year we had under 20 people competing in the salsa competition, but it jumped up to 28."

Ten local restaurants competed in the Restaurant Chili Challenge and sold bowls of chili for \$3.

"We sold close to 5,000 bowls of chili, and we didn't run out like we did last year, that was my goal," said Horn.

"Plymouth Pub won the competition, but the second place winner, Plymouth Super Center, and third, Bushel's Cafe, were all within six votes of each other."

"It was a really successful event. It was so important that we didn't run out of chili because people come to the event to eat chili. We had three restaurants serving chili up to 5 p.m. and one at 7:30 p.m."

Event proceeds will benefit the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association.

### GETTING COOKING

Horn and her husband, Ken, got hooked on cooking chili after attending their first cookoff, the Ann Arbor-Saline, in 1983.

"It was a lot of fun, and I thought, I can cook chili."

She and Ken competed in their first cookoff in 1985, and placed eighth out of 80.

"It was a great feeling," she said. "And we were raising money for charity. When we moved to Plymouth in 1985 we thought this would be a great place for a chili cookoff. We had our first one in 1995."

"Organization is key. I love the event, it's like putting on a wedding every year for 10,000 people."

Although she and Ken don't compete as much as they used to, Annette won a cookoff in Cincinnati in July to qualify for the 2002 World Cookoff that took place two weeks ago in Reno.

"It's been heaven to compete in the World Cookoff," said Horn. "You want to get there, the fact that you made it is enough of an accomplishment. We've been a couple of times. Ken's made it to the final table."

What's the difference between their pots of chili?

"Mine's a little hotter than Ken's," said Horn. "He uses different chili powder than I do."

Cooks who compete in cookoffs, sanctioned by the International Chili Society,



Above, a variety of spices, hot and mild salsa, adorn the table of one of the competitors at the Chili Cookoff.

aren't allowed to use beans, pasta or any fillers.

"Even though beans add fiber, it's difficult to judge," said Horn. "The judges are taking one spoonful. If you happened to get a spoonful of beans you wouldn't be able to judge. Beans just get in the way."

At home, when she makes a big pot of



PHOTO'S PAUL HIRSCHMANN | OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

Jim Weller encourages his wife, chili champ Georgia Weller, as she stirs her pot of Southern Chili Georgia Style. Georgia took first place in the red chili competition Sunday, Oct. 13 at the Great Lakes Regional Chili Cookoff in Plymouth.

chili, Horn throws in beans. Her secret is to use fresh ingredients and a good cut of meat.

### FRESH SPICES

"Fresh spices are absolutely, number one," she said. "Every time I go to a new cookoff I get all new spices, they perk up the flavor. I can taste stale chili powder."

"The meat has to have a little fat to make a good gravy. A lot of chili competition cooks use a cut called California Tri-Tip. You can order it from the market, I've gotten it at Busch's and Hiller's. It's a cut that's mainly sold out in California. You can also use coarse ground hamburger. Some cooks use sirloin or chuck

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## Plan ahead so you'll know 'what's for dinner tonight'

Dinner tonight?

Had to work late again? Are traffic tie-ups and construction projects creating a roadblock in your family dinner plans? Picking up the kids from after school sports? Trying to stay to committed to post day workouts at the gym and get dinner on the table?

Lists and planning are the keys to success, and the best way to beat frustration and stress. Set meal planning objectives. We plan everything else in our lives, work, vacations, workouts, social activities and more, why not put a little effort into a good meal plan? What could be more important than planning what we put into our body to maintain high energy levels, and good health? You will find that with a little planning you'll spend less time frantically running to the market, stressing, and most



plan at the start of the weekend. Create a grocery list from the menus, and plan a shopping trip to your favorite grocery store or market on Sunday.

Include larger cuts of meats in your menu. For example, purchase a whole pork loin. Plan on serving boneless pork chops on Monday, roast and slice the rest of the meat for future dishes like quesadillas or pork sandwiches, or cut the pork loin into

likely save money along the way.

Here are some tips:

■ Develop your dinner game

■ It's always a good idea to stock up on a couple of true blue staples. One of my favorite's is organic brown rice. Go ahead, make a big pot of brown rice flavored with celery, carrots, onions, fresh cracked pepper and salt. Cool on a flat sheet or pan in the fridge and then portion into resalable bags. On a long day dinner could be as simple as dropping your bag into boiling water and steaming veggies in the same pot or serving a big scoop brown rice with a green

salad.

■ Spice up dinner tonight with relishes, chutneys, and salsas.

■ Make a pot of chili or soup once a month and freeze. Add a good multi-grain bread and a speedy tossed salad and you're home free.

With a planning you'll know "what's for dinner tonight" and not be stressed by frequent stops at the store, and over spending. You'll also have the peace of mind that comes with knowing you and your family will be getting the nutrients you need for good health and success.

See recipes inside. Kelli Lewton is an instructor at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, and owner of Too Unique, and event planning and catering company, and Olive's To Go in Birmingham. Look for her column in Taste on the third Sunday of the month.

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