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Chef's Apron

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There are many wonderful things about living in the country. Fresh air. Easy access to the mountains for skiing and hiking. A beautiful lake just around the corner. Still the country is not for everyone. If you've spent most of your life in the city or a sprawling suburb, the peace and quiet can be a bit unsettling. And then there are a whole bunch of new sights, sounds and smells that can be even more unnerving. Take for instance, a bear investigating the bird feeder on your deck, a coyote howling at the moon or a skunk wandering around your garden.

Except for some great people, there is not much I miss about the hectic, hustle and bustle life I had before moving back to New England. I don't miss working 5:00-to-9:00 (no, that's not a typo!) or jumping on airplanes a couple of times a week. I don't miss having a cell phone glued to my ear. And I certainly don't miss sitting in traffic for hours (usually with a cell phone glued to my ear.)

But I do miss trick-or-treaters. I will soon celebrate my fifth Halloween in my house near Pleasant Lake. So far, I have only had one, yes only one, trick-or-treater. To be honest, I'm not really sure if he qualifies as a true trick-or-treater. As far as I could tell, he was cleverly disguised as himself. It was dark, it was raining and it's possible he came to the door for directions or to borrow a cup of sugar. I was so happy to see him that I gave him a candy bar and wished him a Happy Halloween. He quickly left without saying much of anything.

Given my love of all things Halloween, especially the costume part, I would be delighted to have a swarm of little fairy princesses, ghosts and super heroes at my doorstep on all hallow's eve. Unfortunately, they don't come. It's not like I'm one of those peculiar ladies who lives in a rickety old house, high on the top of a ghostly hill. Okay, maybe I'm a bit peculiar but I don't live on a hill. And unless I'm having a bad hair day, I'm hardly scary. I keep telling myself, it's not me; it's the neighborhood. By Halloween, the summer people are long gone and most of the snow birds have taken flight and headed south. With most of the houses are empty, the pick'ens are pretty slim.

When I was little, my family lived in a busy suburban neighborhood. The yards were small and the houses close together. Not so close that you could reach out your window into your neighbor's living room to turn down the volume on the television, but close enough. The baby boom was booming and the neighborhood was swarming with kids. Every house had two or three; some had four or more. The competition for Halloween goodies was steep and plans were not left to the last minute or to chance.

Every Halloween I joined forces with my friends Binky, Mary and Marybeth. By mid-October we were hard at work on our trick-or-treating strategies. Early on it was all about the costumes. We always made our costumes; assembled is probably a better word. We would raid each other's dress-up boxes and before long we were ready to terrorize the neighborhood guised as witches, clowns, hobos and gypsies.

Of course we wanted to maximize our loot. So in the final days leading up to Halloween our strategizing was all about the route. Our goal was to visit as many houses as we possibly could before everyone ran out of candy. To complicate matters, we had a few favorites. We certainly didn't want to miss out on one neighbor's hand-dipped candy apples or another's sticky, sweet popcorn balls.

Finally the big night finally arrived and outfitted in our ghoulish best we raced through the neighborhood. Whether you have a stampede of goblins and ghouls at your door or spend a quiet evening with a good mystery, Happy Halloween and,

Bon appétit!

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**PO Box 1875 – New London
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Buttery Chocolate Almond Brittle

Whether you have trick-or-treaters or not, why not try your hand at a homemade sweet treat! Enjoy!

- 1/2 cup whole almonds, toasted
- 1/2 cup each – semi sweet, milk and white chocolate chips
- 1 cup coconut, toasted
- 1 1/4 pounds (5 sticks) butter
- 3 cups sugar
- Dash salt
- 1/3 cup water
- 1 tablespoon vanilla

In a medium bowl, toss together the almonds, chocolate chips and coconut. Put them on a baking sheet lined with a silicon baking mat, spreading them out into an even single layer.



Put butter, sugar, salt and water in a heavy pot over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Remove the spoon and cook to 300-310 degrees on a candy thermometer. Stir in the vanilla.



Carefully pour the hot sugar over the nut mixture and let cool. Be careful not to touch the cookie sheet after the sugar has been poured. The baking sheet will be very hot; let cool completely, at least 2 hours. Break the brittle into pieces and serve.