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Save on Halloween treats

No tricks to the low prices for pumpkins, other products available at your local commissary

By Kay Blakley,
DeCA home economist

FORT LEE, Va. – Have you purchased your pumpkin yet? No matter where you're stationed, it's a good bet your local commissary is making room for those bright orange globes soon to grace every porch in the neighborhood.

Don't carve your pumpkin too early; it won't last much longer than a day or two once it's open to the elements. Do be sure to harvest the seeds from its center, though. They're one of the healthiest treats on the Halloween agenda and are very easy to roast – just follow the Roasted Pumpkin Seeds recipe listed on Kay's Kitchen at http://www.commissaries.com.

If you're trying your best to keep it healthy this year, focus on treats like individual cheese and cracker packages, sugar-free gum, string cheese sticks, juice boxes, small packages of nuts or raisins, peanuts in the shell or single-serve bags of microwave popcorn. Your commissary has plenty of all these choices in stock.

One of this week's featured recipes is even a good choice for those wanting to avoid cholesterol and saturated fat – a chocolate cupcake that uses no butter or eggs. And, it's to-die-for delicious. Use the special dark chocolate blend of cocoa to make the finished product almost Halloween black, garnish the tops with small Halloween candies, and you'll be instantly known as the best baker on the block. Turn plain tomato juice, fresh radishes and pimento-stuffed olives

into a batch of Bloody Eyeballs on the Rocks, and you'll be the best drink maker in the neighborhood, too.

Recipes for all those items and much more are gathered and waiting for you at Kay's Kitchen. Get the ingredients at the commissary, pick your favorite treat and get cooking. Those cute little ghosts and goblins will be arriving at your doorstep before you know it.

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Bloody Eyeballs on the Rocks

Three simple ingredients and this fun recipe make for a ghoulishly good time at your next Halloween celebration. Make as many or as few as you'll need.

Ingredients:
12 medium fresh red radishes
12 small pimento-stuffed olives
Tomato juice

Directions:
1. Use a vegetable peeler to peel the radishes, but leave a few thin, scraggly streaks of red peeling to serve as the ruptured blood vessels in an eyeball.
2. Use the sharp tip of the vegetable peeler to scoop out a small hole in the center of each radish, just large enough for an olive to fit inside.
3. Stuff one olive, pimento-side-out, into each radish.
4. Place one radish eyeball in each section of an empty ice cube tray; fill with water and freeze solid.
5. At party time, pour tall glasses of tomato juice and float a pair of bloody eyeballs in each glass.

Chocolate Cupcakes, Super Easy, Super Moist (Makes 12)

This unusual recipe uses no butter and no eggs, but produces a surprisingly moist and tasty cupcake. The coffee is needed to mellow out the cocoa, so if caffeine is an issue, use decaf.

Ingredients:
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup brewed coffee (or 1 cup of warm water mixed with 1 1/2 teaspoons espresso powder or instant coffee granules)
1 tablespoon white vinegar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Frosting:
4 tablespoons butter
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1 1/2 cup powdered sugar
3 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees; place rack in middle position. Prepare muffin tin with cupcake liners.
2. In a large bowl, vigorously whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, sugar, baking soda and salt until there are no visible clumps.
3. In a separate bowl, mix together the coffee, vinegar, vanilla extract and oil.
4. Pour wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir only until they just come together. The mixture should be thin and somewhat lumpy.
5. Ladle the batter into the cupcake liners, filling two-thirds full.
6. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
7. Remove from oven, cool in pan for 5 minutes, then remove from pan to a cooling rack and cool completely. Serve plain, sprinkled with powdered sugar, or drizzled or coated with frosting.

Frosting:
1. Melt butter in a small saucepan, over medium-low heat. Off heat, stir in the cocoa until smooth.
2. Sprinkle in about one-third of the powdered sugar; stir. Sprinkle with half the milk and the vanilla extract; stir until well combined.
3. Continue to alternate adding the remaining powdered sugar and milk, stirring after each addition, until the frosting is smooth and of spreading consistency. If too thin, add more powdered sugar; if too thick, stir in more milk.

-DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings amounting to thousands of dollars annually. For current savings figures for various groups – single member up to a family of seven – visit http://www.commissaries.com. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*