

Spookybook Treats

Halloween is right around the corner... ok it's 2 months away! But Halloween stuff is out all over the stores already, and while we're planning our Haunted Tour for our community theater group, our other friends in the theater are getting ready to stage an hilarious (TANGENT ALERT: I HATE using the word "an" before words that start with h, but I guess that's proper English, so...) production of the play called Kitchen Witches! Someone had a great idea to sell a Halloween cookbook as a fundraiser for the theater. Being a stay-at-home-mom of 4, I have a few holiday-themed recipes in my vault that are fun for the kids *and* adults (to eat), so I'm going to contribute my favorite Halloween recipes. Since I have to type them up to submit to the cookbook anyway, I thought I'd put them on my blog, along with a recipe for one of my favorite desserts: peanut butter bars – YUM!

Toasted Pumpkin Seeds

large pumpkins

salt

seasonings (your choice)

butter

Extract seeds from pumpkin, separate from pulp, and discard pulp. Put the seeds in a colander and run water over them to get rid of all the pulp. Drain on paper towels. Melt 1 Tablespoon of butter and toss pumpkin seeds in a bowl with the butter and salt and / or seasonings. Spread seeds out onto a cookie sheet. Toast seeds in an oven preheated to 350° for about 30 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes and adding salt occasionally. Check the seeds to see if they're done by taking a sample out, letting it cool, and tasting it. If the insides are dry, they're done. Be careful not to burn – you want a nice golden brown color.

NOTES: I use a clean, thin dishcloth instead of paper towels since I've had problems in the past with the seeds sticking to

the paper towels. Be creative with the seasonings; you can use popcorn seasoning, taco seasoning, garlic salt, onion powder, cayenne pepper, cajun seasoning, etc. Pumpkin seeds are high in iron, vitamin A, and zinc; if you want to make them even healthier use olive oil instead of butter.

Rice Krispies Treats Spiders

YIELD: 3-5 spiders

3 Tablespoons margerine or butter

1 package (10 oz. or about 40) marshmallows or 4 cups mini marshmallows

6 cups rice krispies cereal

food coloring

prepared frosting

candy corn

string licorice

shredded coconut

In a large microwave-safe bowl, melt margerine and marshmallows on high for 2 minutes, stirring after 1 minute. Add a few drops of food coloring and stir mixture until smooth. Add rice krispies cereal, stirring until well coated. Let cereal mixture slightly cool until it is safe to touch. With buttered hands, shape cereal mixture into spider shape and place on wax paper. Let cool. Attach decorations to the spider with frosting using candy corn for eyes, licorice for the web, and coconut for the hair. You can color the coconut by soaking in warm water with a few drops of food coloring for about 30 minutes. Dry coconut on a paper towel before using.

Peanut Butter Bars

1 lb. powdered sugar

2 cups graham cracker crumbs

2 sticks melted butter

12 oz. peanut butter

Mix all ingredients together in a 9×13 non-greased pan. Melt

large bag of chocolate chips and spread on top. Cut into squares in pan and refrigerate until cold.

Now I REALLY Hate Walmart

And my husband is on the bandwagon too. My husband is a clearance maniac – he loves finding good deals on stuff that's been marked down from its original price. He found he especially loved the clearance deals at the Defiance Ohio Walmart, which is not too far from us. But yesterday, that changed...

It turns out that the Defiance Walmart, which is only a few months old, by the way, changed their clearance prices overnight! They used to have some really good discounts, and it was fun to go there and try to find them. But now, they haven't just changed the way they mark stuff down; they've taken actual clearance items that were already marked down and marked them back up!

Case in point: My husband had a Plantronics Headset that he bought last week for \$5. It broke, so he was going to return it, but he forgot it at home. No problem, he thought, I'll just buy a new one for \$5 and return the old one another time. WRONG – unless he wanted to spend \$21 on the new one! That's right, they took a \$5 clearance item and marked it up to \$21 – more than **quadruple** the price!!! So he asked the lady in electronics if they raised their clearance prices, and she said, "I'm not going to lie to you. We did raise the prices. They took away our clearance budget." Whatever that means. Not something I, the consumer, should be concerned with... except that they took all the fun out of clearance shopping at Walmart! And of course the people at customer service couldn't help us return our headset since we didn't

have the broken one with us... their suggestion? Buy a new one for \$21, then return the broken one later for \$5 – thanks but no thanks! Here are some other examples of clearance items that they re-inflated: ATI Video Card from \$50 to \$115, Panasonic Cordless Phone from \$30 to \$69, and a US Robotics SkypePhone from \$5 to \$16. Each of these items had at least a 100% increase in price. I understand that the economy sucks and inflation and blah, blah, but I think Walmart should have kept these items on the clearance where they had them; then started their new clearance policy with new clearance items. I mean, come on, is Walmart really that worried about going broke?

The bottom line is, Walmart keeps finding ways to take away whatever fun is left in shopping. First it was by playing their little pricing games that get us to spend more and close down their competition, and now they've taken away their good clearance deals. Well, maybe their policies will bite them in the you-know-what come Christmas time when they don't have any room on their shelves for the new Christmas products because no one wants to touch their crappy clearance items at their not-so-clearance prices!

MiRRors

Hmm, I couldn't figure out how to make one of the R's in [Mirrors](#) backward like they do for the movie title, but anyway, we saw the movie [Mirrors](#) with [Keifer Sutherland](#) yesterday. It was between [Mirrors](#), [Tropic Thunder](#), and [The Rocker](#). We eliminated [The Rocker](#) from the selection because it didn't look or sound very good, and the only reason we were interested in seeing it is because it stars [Rainn Wilson](#), none other than the hilarious character Dwight Shrute on our

favorite show, *The Office*. We ended up going with *Mirrors* over *Tropic Thunder* because we were at the nice theater, and we figured a horror movie would give us more bang for our buck so to speak – take advantage of the larger screen and the nicer sound.

Mirrors is kind of lengthy for a horror film; it runs about 2 hours. It didn't drag for me at all, well, maybe a little, but only because baby Christopher decided to poopie during the movie and he needed his diaper changed. So I was like, when is this going to be over so I can change him because I don't want to miss the movie. It was a cool premise: Keifer Sutherland plays an NYPD cop who accidentally shot and killed another cop, so he still has some psychological bruises and can no longer be a cop. He gets a job as a security guard at an abandoned department store that had had a fire and burned – right up my alley; I really like abandoned buildings, defunct amusement parks, etc. The department store was cool looking, and throughout the movie, there were lots of shots of the outside as well as the inside. I kept wondering if it was an actual building they used for filming or rather a specially built facade... But anyway, the department store is haunted and the haunting ghoul uses mirrors to do its haunting and murdering. There is actually more to the plot, but I don't want to risk spilling any spoilers because it was a decent horror movie and worth seeing. We were alone in the theater, and when my husband left to go to the bathroom, I was pretty creeped out, so I'd say it was spookily successful. Before we saw the movie, I had read that the director, [Alexandre Aja](#), is one of a group of directors a horror movie magazine called, "The Splat Pack" for their affinity for blood and gore. The movie was not without blood and gore, but it was not over-used; something that gets on my nerves with many modern horror films – see #'s 1,2, and 5 on [my movie stinker list](#) – (*The Devil's Rejects*, *Doomsday*, and *The Fun Park*) – all terrible movies showcasing the over-usage of gore.

If you like horror movies, *Mirrors* is worth a try. We liked it and were entertained, despite it having a few obvious plot holes... but then again, what horror movie doesn't have plot holes?

A 9 Foot WHAT?!?

A 9 foot *tapeworm*. Eww and ouch – enough said!
Here's the story:

A man who contends he got a 9-foot tapeworm after eating undercooked fish is suing a Chicago restaurant.

In a lawsuit filed Monday, Anthony Franz says he ordered salmon salad for lunch from Shaw's Crab House in 2006 and fell violently ill. He later passed the giant parasite, which a pathologist determined came from undercooked fish, such as salmon.

Franz's lawsuit seeks \$100,000 from Shaw's and its parent company, Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises.

Franz claims the restaurant's staff was negligent in serving him improperly cooked fish.

But Carrol Symank, vice president of food safety for Lettuce Entertain You, says the tapeworm didn't come from Shaw's Crab House.

Sleepwalkers

With the exception of [Thinner](#), I've liked most of the [Stephen King](#) movies I've seen. My favorite is [Storm of the Century](#), a Prime-Time Emmy Award winning made-for-tv mini-series that aired in 1999. Every winter when a big blizzard is predicted in our corner of Ohio, we plan on being snowed in watching our Storm of the Century dvd. It never happens though; I think it has to do with trying to watch a 240 minute movie that's not for kids when we have 4 of them. But anyway, if we ever get time to watch Storm of the Century in the near future, I'll definitely blog more about it – it's awesome!

One of Stephen King's lesser known films, [Sleepwalkers](#), is a movie I saw as a teenager. I liked it back then, so when I happened to see the dvd on the library's shelf the other day, that's what I quickly picked up since I was in a hurry. My husband and I watched it the other night, and we both had the same opinion. A fun little horror film, nothing great but still entertaining. It is Stephen King-creepy, as only he can do, and much of the movie's creepiness has to do with the mother-son relationship; I won't go into detail except to say that it's extremely disturbing. [Brian Krause](#) and [Alice Krige](#) play the mother and son monsters who need to feed on a human virgin in order to survive. They morph into strange cat-like creatures, which is even more strange because cats are drawn to their house, yet deadly to the monsters at the same time. The special effects are extremely cheesy by today's standards and even laughable, but sometimes I'm a sucker for that kind of thing and really enjoy bad special effects – my favorite example of this is [Jaws 3-D](#).

While we're on the subject of Stephen King, as I mentioned, I like most of his movies that I've seen. I tried to read the book *Carrie* a really long time ago, but I found it hard to follow, either because I was a teen or because of the religious ramblings inserted throughout the book which were

done in such a way that it's hard to follow because it's depicting Carrie's mother's craziness. But anyway, Stephen King is very talented, of course. He has a gift of making movies extremely creepy without stooping as low as many of today's horror movies do with the constant blood and gore.

An interesting event took place in his life that almost reads like one of his novels, well, actually it does since he wrote about it. On June 19, 1999, his life was changed forever when he was hit by a car while walking down a Maine road. There are two creepy coincidences about this incident. First, earlier that year, King had finished most of *From a Buick 8*, a novel in which a character dies after getting struck by a car. Second, the driver of the car, Bryan Smith, who was only 43, was found dead in his trailer just over a year later of an accidental overdose. He was found dead on Stephen King's birthday, September 21. The accident was inspiration for the *Dark Tower* series of books, and King is in talks with Lost co-creator J.J. Abrams to do an adaptation of the series. Since I'm a fan of Lost *and* Stephen King, that might be something I'll have to check out. Until then, I'll probably be planning another snowy viewing of Storm of the Century this winter that won't come to fruition.

Back To School And Redirection

Today is the first day back to school (already?!?), and it's really quiet around here. I guess my oldest two are my loudest two, and we have reduced the traffic in the house by 50% since half the kids are now at school during the day. Thank goodness for school; I'm enjoying myself already. So

far, I've gotten two loads of laundry done – folded, put away and everything, and I have somehow also found the time today to put away most of the clutter that's been haunting our dining room table for the last week and a half. I even got to work on my e-book a little bit, and it's not even 1 o'clock! And, the kids at school are learning stuff, getting exercise, and socializing with their friends; they're not vegged out in front of the tv or outside fighting in the wading pool. Everyone wins!

While the oldest 2 kids are in school, I also have time to focus on my toddler, Disney, while her baby brother is napping. Today, I got to sit on the floor and play puzzles with her; something we haven't done together in months, almost a year because of my pregnancy and c-section. And she was down for her nap by 12:30, which not only means some quality time together for me and baby Christopher, but also that my toddler should be to bed at a decent hour tonight. Win-win! While I was on the floor playing with my daughter, I was getting up to tend to the laundry and whatnot. My daughter was following me around the house, and this is where my day becomes challenging – trying to keep our clingy almost 2-year-old out of my husband's home office so he can work. The home office isn't a room where he could close the door and utilize the out-of-sight-out-of-mind tactic. The office is on the landing on our second floor, so if my toddler begins to head up the stairs or even *looks* up the stairs, she sees her best friend, Daddy, and it's over. She tantrums until he holds her, and he can't get any work done. Today she got upstairs and in the clutches of Daddy, so when I chased her down, of course she was upset. But I used one of my favorite child-rearing techniques: redirection. I taught her how to clean the toothpaste off the kids' bathroom counter, which she happily did. We went downstairs for a popsicle, puzzles, and Barney, and all was forgotten. Wow. I had totally forgotten about the magic of the redirection technique because the last 2-year-old I had in the house was our "spirited" child,

Samantha. Sammie was **never** re-directable. She has always been so strong-willed that it's literally impossible to re-direct the kid, let alone being able to trick her into helping around the house. To this day, she will fight for her cause, whatever it may be, until she gets what she wants or she passes out. And now that she's older (she's 4), the crying doesn't last as long, but she will remember what it is she wanted and bring it up throughout the day (or week or month) until she gets it. So I am actually *enjoying* Disney's terrible twos a little bit – it's so refreshing to have a kid who listens. I know, she's not yet 2 and things could get worse – so much worse. But I've been there, done that, and after what Sammie put us through, no wonder Disney seems like a breeze. And even if she does get completely crazy, soon she'll be old enough to go to school, and we'll start the terrible twos all over again with Christopher. After 3 tantruming girls in their terrible twos, I'm curious to see what a boy will be like. Probably no big deal, at least compared to Sammie ☐

Terrorizing Tangents

After the drive-through animal safari (see [my previous post](#)). We were **SO** ready for dinner, but instead, we headed to [Ghostly Manor](#) in Sandusky, Ohio, hoping to beat the Saturday night crowds. It's weird because it's a haunted house that's open year-round, and it's in the middle of a roller skating rink / arcade. You pay your admission, and then you wait in line for your doom (insert evil laugh here). Someone raps at the door to signal your turn in the haunted house, and let's be honest – it's **so** much better than we could ever do at the haunted house (or haunted tour, as we are calling it) that is planned for October's weekends in Williams County Ohio. But,

we have a teeny-weeny budget, so how can we possibly compare? Also, we cannot have narrow corridors (nor the “birth canal hallway”; something they had that I was not thrilled with, but would be a very scary tool if we could work with it. But I wouldn’t want to really try because it totally seemed like a lawsuit waiting to happen...), so that makes it a different type of haunted house to begin with. But anyway... they say it’s the 4th scariest in the nation and I believe them. Although I have to admit to being curious about the top 3 haunted houses on that list... what is so scary? Let me know which haunted houses are rated the scariest; as soon as you find out. I do know that while traipsing through Ghostly Manor, I grabbed my husband’s shirt (he was in front of me), and I didn’t let go... I let him lead me through the birth canal, past the skeletons and falling maggots, and I actually *pushed* him (hard!) past the vibrating floor boards (another something we can’t do because of low budget). He ventured through the lair several times after that without me, and I don’t know what his experience in the Ghostly Manor was like without my pushing, shoving, and screaming, but he *said* it was better with me along...

Either way, it was a really fun day, and we came home with lots of ideas for our haunted tour. Ours will be touring in October, so check it out on October 10-11, 17-18, 24-25, and 31-Nov. 1 in Bryan Ohio. See ya then!!!!

Saturday Slobber

Well, school starts on Tuesday, so for one last summery hurrah, we ventured over to the coastal cities in Ohio on Lake Erie for some fun. First stop was the African Safari Park in Port Clinton, which is really more of a drive-thru zoo than

anything having to do with Africa. They do have zebras, giraffes, and camels, but most of their animals hail from North America. It's always an extremely fun experience, and we try to go every year. Since this summer was very busy with the new baby and all, it didn't occur to me that we hadn't gone yet until I struck up a conversation with a really nice elderly couple at a restaurant the other day. When I asked where they were from, they replied, "west of Cleveland", so that got me thinking about the Safari Park in Port Clinton. On the way home from the restaurant that night, I said to my husband, you know, we haven't been to the safari park this year... An idea was hatched, and there we were on Saturday with 6 of our closest friends.

Saturday morning was almost like a one-act play with all of us standing there on our front porch, trying to figure out who was going to ride with whom; we were trying to find the best way to do things to be as economically (and environmentally) friendly as possible... We ended up taking just 2 cars for the 12 of us, and then once we got to Port Clinton, it was like musical chairs (cars) once again while we tried to figure out how to position everyone to get the most bang for our buck, so to speak, since the safari place charges by carload *and* by individual...

So anyway, after a stop at Cheese Haven In Port Clinton – and now I have to go off on yet another tangent because Cheese Haven is SOOO good and totally worth a stop if you're in the area. And what I mean by "in the area" is anywhere up to 100 or even 1000 miles, depending on how much you like cheese. They have so many varieties, along with fresh jerkies and beef sticks and other yummy treats. We stopped there to get our lunch of corned beef sandwiches – and they have the **best** corned beef sandwiches, yum. Unfortunately, I was not willing to take 4 kids into the cheese store to run around, so I was stuck in the car with the kids, but my oh-so-thoughtful hubby talked the worker into making me a sample bag (which they're

not supposed to do, you only get the free samples if you go into the store, but hey, I was stuck in the car), AND he made my sandwich for me – how sweet ☐

Ok, tangent aside... now we've arrived at the Safari Park, and it is SO crowded... Makes me think twice about going there again next summer unless it's near their last weekend of operation like it was when we went last year... I mean, I just can't stand waiting in line to go to the bathroom, of all things... Waiting in line is not much fun at all, but when you're waiting in line to do something as necessary and as unrewarding as going to the bathroom, it's really annoying. So, because it was so crowded, it took us forever to get through the drive-through zoo part; although not as long as it took the other vehicle in our caravan because they were stuck behind an obscenely slow white van the whole time... So while we got out of the drive-through section, they had barely just begun... But the whole park is a really cool place; even more so if you don't care about the vanity nor cleanliness of your car since there are some rather huge creatures (including deer, elk, elands, buffalo, zebras, giraffe and longhorns) who drool, head-butt, lick, slobber, and basically invade your car as you drive through *their* habitat. I think you must truly be an animal lover to appreciate the place since you come out filthy... This was the first time we had been there in our new car, but I'm happy to report no major damage, that I know about, at least; but what's this about driving our car through a pond, jamiahsh?!?

We'll get to the bottom of that later... when you come out of the drive-through part, it's time for the walk-through zoo section, and there they have monkeys, macaws (military, not green-winged as the sign said), ocelots, warthogs, alpacas, and tortoises; not to mention rides for the kiddes: ponies and camels. I noticed that they had 2 camels for riding; one was resting while the other gave the rides. But interestingly, one was a Dromedary and the other a Bactrian

camel, the difference between the two species being mainly in how many humps they had... My daughters rode the Dromedary (1 hump), and they really seemed to enjoy themselves – I wonder if riding the Bactrian (2 humps) would have been any different? I was envious because I'm no where near the 125 lb. weight limit, so I'll probably never get to ride a camel... After that, we got to check out an animal show, ironically titled "Laugh With the Animals". It was ironic because our host for the show was so dry – she had the audience doing everything *but* laughing... It was a fun show, though, and something that we hadn't yet done at the park in our previous visits. Overall, an interesting day... as it is anytime you have 12 people on an outing together!

If you liked reading my synopsis of the day, check out my fellow tangents.org blogger and get Jamiahsh's take on the whole thing. I'm going to take a lesson from him and blog this in 2 installments... got to leave the readers craving more, so they say! Check out my next post for a full summary of our visit to a year-round haunted house – Ghostly Manor in Sandusky, Ohio! Until then...

A Can Of Formula And A Pack Of Marlboros, Please

Yesterday we made a trip to our second-closest Walmart, and that location keeps their baby formula behind the counter, with the cigarettes. I guess formula theft is rampant, at least at that Walmart location. The cashier said something about it being used to make drugs, but I don't know if that's just her own hypothesis or if it's true, but it doesn't really make sense to me. Whatever the reason, it's so much more

inconvenient for us regular shoppers. Not only do I have to remember to get the formula on the way out, but we have to stand in a special line since only the one checkout lane has the formula. Then you have to be clear on which kind you want, and you have to make sure the cashier knows what you're talking about because there are at least 10 varieties. It would stink to come home and find that you were given the wrong kind or had forgotten the formula altogether, which did happen to me last time I shopped at that Walmart location. Anyone who has or has had little kids can understand how crazy kids can get in the checkout line. Not only is it boring (especially at Walmart, where it often takes forever and a day also), but they're nice enough to stock both sides of the aisle with plenty of tempting goodies for kids, conveniently all at eye level. So the kids often are going crazy in the checkout line, and now the weary parent is expected to remember they still need their formula (and probably cigarettes, the way the shopping trip is going!) and to make sure they get the right kind of formula. It's a stupid set-up, and I really hope they don't implement this change at my local Walmart where I do most of my shopping. I have a suggestion that would make things a wee bit easier if they insist on keeping the formula behind the counter. In the baby section of the store, have papers with bar codes on them corresponding to the different types of formulas. That way, we can just grab the slip we need and put it in our cart, eliminating the need for remembering to get the formula later or confusion with the cashier. This system works well when you buy large items, like swingsets, so why not try it with formula?

And while we got on the subject of drugs with the cashier, she told us an interesting tidbit about Walmart's cash registers. It seems they are trained to recognize the combination of supplies one needs to create a meth lab. If someone buys this combination of items, the register will alert the employee. Now I'm as opposed to meth labs as the next person, and I

certainly don't want them in my neighborhood, but when the Walmart cash register is programmed to tell you what *not* to buy... I think that's a little too much. Big brother, here we come...

Lookit The Cute Meeses

Two baby moose are called what? Twin baby mooses, I guess... But anyway, check out this really cute video I received via email – a baby moose finds someone's backyard sprinkler, then he goes over and “tells” his mommy and twin brother about it, and they all enjoy themselves tremendously. The mommy moose grooms her babies in it, and the babies play together – it's SO cute!

Sure beats the other baby moose video I saw this week – we won't go into that (you fellow CNN junkies know what I'm talking about), just nature taking its course, I guess... But let's focus on the cute mooses (?) playing in the sprinkler instead:

[Click here](#) for some extremely cute baby animal action.