

# Spooktacular Cuisine

When I think about what we have been through this past year it's remarkable. An unknown virus that led to unprecedented closures, followed by the resurgence of the same virus in another form, smoke, fires, and ugh! I feel like we could all use a wind of change. I am looking forward to the milder temperature, some moisture accumulation, and a break from the intensity of life. I need something to look forward to. Nothing monumental, just little things.

I am ready to get excited about things that never used to excite me, to pursue positivity in a world that is not always supportive of that mindset. I want to live on the bright side and reinvent the things that need to be made new. A fresh start, a new outlook, an inspired soul.

First on the agenda, holidays. Since Halloween is the next in line, I'll start there. Traditionally, I am not much on celebrating Halloween. The holiday itself seems a bit dark, but this year is different somehow. The old tradition, get a Papa Murphy's Jack O Lantern Pizza and go trick or treating with our kids in a neighborhood down the street still has its place, but I want to do more. This year, I am going to go all out! Thankfully, the holiday falls on a Sunday so I'll have plenty of time to prep.

Up first, beverages! What kind of spooky drinks should I create? Believe it or not, I say I am going "all out" but I am quite simple in my approach. I will not spend hours in the kitchen, but after an exhaustive search of the web (you see what I did there?), I came up with the best idea for a drink.

Simple, easy, and spooky. Lemon lime soda or sparkling water, ice cubes, and a medicine syringe infused with a liquid red drink like Kool Aid or cranberry juice. Add a plastic spider or vampire teeth for show and voila!



*Nutrition Notes by Natalie*



Next up, the appetizer. A seven layer dip with beans (1), guacamole (2), sour cream (3), cheese (4), scallions (5), olives (6), diced tomato (7). First you layer the beans, sour cream, cheese, and guacamole in a circular design. Next create a border made up of diced tomato, scallions, and diced olives. Finally, use some leftover sour cream and place it in a ziploc bag. Cut a ¼ inch hole in the corner and draw a spider web design on top of the bean dip. Then take two whole olives, slice one in half lengthwise and another one in half widthwise. Use the lengthwise half for the body, the widthwise half for the head and slice the other halves to make eight small strips for the legs. So cute!

Now for the main course! Simply pan fry taco meat and serve it up with crisp taco shells and top with your seven layer dip! Of course you'll need a tray of peeled mandarin oranges with celery stalk stems put together to resemble pumpkins to keep up the theme. Finish it off with skeleton cupcakes and you're set! Simply prepare and frost cupcakes of any flavor. Use a cake pop or lollipop stick for the "backbone." Layer yogurt covered pretzels to create the body cavity and add a marshmallow on top with a spooky skeleton face etched in black writing gel.



Too over the top!? Don't worry, I won't be offended if you opt out of my spooktacular cuisine. I could just use a reason to celebrate and I tend to go a bit nuts! If you decide to join in my Halloween quest, share your ideas with me, better yet, send me pictures. I would love to see your creations! Let's all join together and get excited about life again and find simple ways to celebrate as we look forward to the days to come. Happy Halloween!

*Natalie's email: [foodrdnatalie@gmail.com](mailto:foodrdnatalie@gmail.com)*