

RECIPE, TRAVEL

What Do Ghosts Love to Eat the Most? 7 Ghoulishly Good Recipes From Around the Globe

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Coconut curry, a composed salad, and brioche-like bread may not seem like the treats of Halloween. But from Latin America to Asia, families court unearthly spirits in October and early November by cooking up some delicious dishes.



For much of the world, the [All Hallow's Eve tradition](#) dates back to the Samhain festival celebrated in ancient Ireland and Britain on November 1, when Celts believed the souls of the dead returned to their homes. To keep them away, they lit bonfires, donned ghoulish masks, and left out offerings of food.

In the 7th century, November 1 was declared the Christian holiday of [All Saints' Day](#), perhaps in an effort to snuff out paganism, with [All Soul's Day](#) following on November 2. Much later, trick-or-treating likely evolved from the British practice of handing out “soul cakes” to the poor. It wasn't until the 1970s that mass-produced, wrapped candies became the [Halloween sweets of choice for Americans](#) (though Cocofloss has many ideas for fun alternative treats!).

This spooky season, when autumn winds whirl and goblins and ghosts abound, find comfort in your kitchen with these ghoulishly good recipes from around the globe. They're sure to appease the spirits — or at least tame a monstrous appetite! 🍁

Salad for the Cemetery in Guatemala

Fiambre

With as many as 50 ingredients, *fiambre* salad is not a last-minute dish. But as one Guatemalan cook told [Saveur](#), “Who knows what the dead want? With fiambre, they can pick their favorite things.” Hearts of palm, chorizo, cabbage, baby corn, beets, sardines, shrimp — all are fair game for *fiambre*, which means “served cold.”

You'll find this colorful, layered salad only on All Saints' Day in Guatemala, where families traditionally bring the dish to cemeteries as an offering to ancestral spirits. These days, family and friends share fiambre

Varieties include beet-rich fiambre *rojo*, vegetarian fiambre *verde*, and cabbage-packed fiambre *blanco*. Since making the dish is time- and labor-intensive, take a tip from Guatemalans and prepare it in advance with the help of loved ones. *¡Buen provecho!*

🍴 🍂 🍴 Recipe for fiambre from Growing Up Bilingual



Cambodia's Flavorful Feast for Hungry Ghosts

Amok

In Cambodia, even the dead work up an appetite. During the 15-day fall holiday of [Pchum Ben](#), also known as the “Hungry Ghosts Festival,” families prepare an enormous feast for their ancestors. They bring their dishes to pagodas, where Buddhist monks act as intermediaries between the living and the dead, [accepting the nourishing gifts in exchange for “merit.”](#)

Balls of sticky rice are common offerings — and are [sometimes tossed into rice fields](#) to satisfy the ghosts. Many cooks also prepare Khmer delicacies, including one of Cambodia's most famous dishes: [amok](#), a mild, custard-like curry made with coconut milk, kaffir lime leaves, and flaky fish, steamed and served in a banana leaf. At some celebrations, the monks eat their fill and then [everyone is invited to join in this spiritual potluck.](#)

🍴 🍂 🍴 Recipe for amok fish curry from *Saveur*



Spiced Bonfire Bliss in Northern England

Parkin

Imagine [warm, sticky gingerbread cake](#) served on a cold autumn eve beside a roaring fire. In Northern England, locals take part in this sweet tradition every year on November 5, [Guy Fawke's Night](#), or Bonfire Night — and to some, [Parkin Night](#). Traditionally made with oatmeal, dark molasses, and golden syrup (similar to corn syrup), [parkin has ancient ties to Bonfire Night](#), dating back perhaps to the Vikings and pagan fire ceremonies held at the end of October.

If you happen to be in England on November 5, you'll find festive gatherings of friends around a burning effigy of Guy Fawkes, celebrating the foiled Gunpowder Plot of 1605, in which Fawkes and 12 other men failed to assassinate King James I of England. Sounds like a good enough reason to eat cake!

🍴 🍁 🍴 [Recipe for parkin from *Wired*](#)

Sweet 'n' Spooky in the Philippines

Suman rice cakes, halo-halo, and buko padan

Filipino children in the rural provinces practice "[pangangaluluwa](#)" on All Saints' Day with a kind of caroling and trick-or-treating mash-up. As representatives of lost souls in purgatory, the kids go from house to house, singing songs that ask for alms and prayers. They might receive cash, candy, or more traditionally, [suman](#), which are sweet, sticky rice cakes steamed inside banana leaves.

shack full of [coconut husks](#)!) For Halloween, Cat recommends two recipes that cook up culinary creepiness (even if they aren't traditional to the holiday).

“The ingredients in [halo-halo](#), a traditional Filipino dessert full of yumminess, are quite spooky!” says Cat. “There are bright purple taro chunks, gooey red beans, blood-red gelatin cubes, jack fruit strips (they have the texture of a tongue), and [nata-de-coco](#). Biting into the nata-de-coco is like piercing your teeth into a fresh eyeball — or at least that's how I imagine it. 🤩 Halo-halo is also perfectly named for Halloween!

“[Buko pandan](#), another [coconut](#)- and pandan-flavored dessert, is delectable and has the appearance of radioactive worms! It's slimy deliciousness,” says Cat.

🍴 🍷 🍽️ 🍽️ 🍽️ [Recipe for suman from The Skinny Pot](#)

🍴 🍷 🍽️ 🍽️ 🍽️ [Recipe for halo-halo from Pilipinas Recipes](#)

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Mexican Bread for the Dead

Pan de Muerto

In a tender and loving tradition, Mexican families honor the departed by preparing their favorite foods for *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) on November 2. Elaborate *ofrendas*, or alters, welcome beloved spirits back to the living world with old photos, marigolds, [sugar skulls](#), candles, cinnamon *atole*, and decadent dishes like chocolate-and-chile-spiced *mole*, *calabaza en tacha*, or candied pumpkin, and above all, sweet *pan de muerto* (bread of the dead).

This domed, brioche-like bread features the flavors of orange flower water and anise seed. Shapes of dough on top represent the skull and crossbones of the deceased — or sometimes a [tear from the ancient Aztec goddess of Chimala](#), who cries for the living.

At some [panaderías in the U.S. and Mexico](#), the skilled bakers transform the dough into a fluffy rabbit or a frilly doll to honor children. Families leave the *pan de muerto* out on the *ofrenda* overnight for the dead to dine. Then in the morning, the living return to enjoy bread for breakfast, often with a steaming cup of [Mexican hot chocolate](#).

Day of the Dead Bread (*Pan de Muerto*)

Ingredients

5 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups all-purpose flour, divided

6 large eggs

1 tablespoon anise seeds

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon orange-flower water [[make your own](#), buy in Middle Eastern or gourmet groceries, or purchase [online](#)]

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar, plus more for sprinkling

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) unsalted butter, softened, plus 6 tablespoons melted, divided

Nonstick vegetable oil spray

Directions

Mix yeast, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm water in the bowl of a stand mixer with a wooden spoon or spatula until a sticky dough forms. This is your starter. Let rest, uncovered, in a warm, draft-free area until starter looks very loose and bubbles are forming on top (it will resemble pancake batter on a griddle), about 35 minutes.

Whisk eggs, anise, salt, orange-flower water, and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar in a medium bowl until foamy and sugar begins to dissolve, about 1 minute. Add egg mixture and remaining 5 cups flour to starter and mix with a dough hook on medium-low speed, adding $\frac{3}{4}$ cup softened butter a few pieces at a time, until a soft dough forms, about 5 minutes. Increase speed to medium and continue mixing until sugar is dissolved and dough is shiny and elastic, about 10 minutes (dough will be very sticky).

Lightly brush a large bowl with 2 Tbsp. melted butter. Transfer dough to bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm, draft-free area until almost doubled in size, about 2 hours.

Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper; coat parchment with nonstick spray. Turn out dough onto a clean work surface, then cut off a baseball-sized piece of dough (about one-quarter of the dough). Using your hands, re-shape the larger piece into a smooth round ball and transfer to the center of a prepared sheet. Roll smaller piece into an 8"-long log, then divide into 4 equal lengths. Shape one of those lengths into a ball and place on second prepared sheet 3" from the edge.

Roll another length of dough with the palm of your hand into an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "-long rope, pressing out from the center so the middle is thinner and both ends are knobby, resembling a bone. Place on prepared

wrap. Let rise in a warm, draft-free area until almost doubled in size, about 1½ hours.

Preheat oven to 325°. Remove plastic wrap and carefully pick up one of the bones, lifting from the ends (it will stretch and deflate slightly). Drape over large dough round, positioning at 10 o'clock and 4 o'clock. Repeat with second bone, positioning at 2 o'clock and 8 o'clock. Position third bone at 12 o'clock and 6 o'clock. Carefully place smaller ball in the center, at the point where bones overlap, gently pressing edges of ball into bones and larger ball, crowning the loaf.

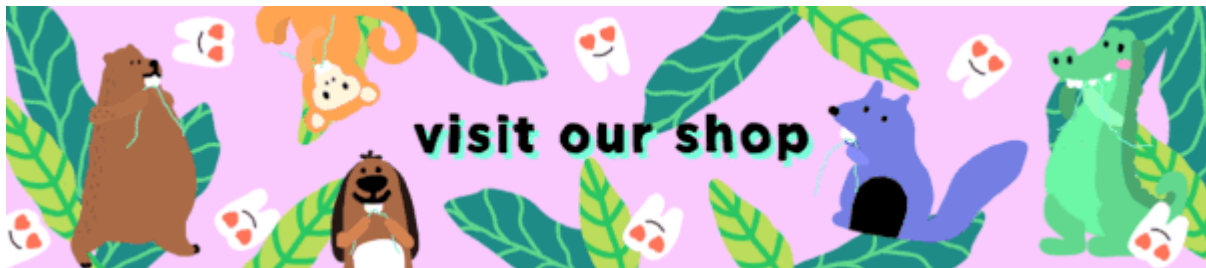
Bake bread until browned and it sounds hollow when tapped with your fingertips, 40–50 minutes. Working in sections, brush one-quarter of the loaf with melted butter and immediately sprinkle with sugar so that it sticks. Repeat with remaining sections and butter. Let cool on a wire rack at least 1 hour before slicing.

Do Ahead: Dough rounds and bones can be formed 1 day ahead; cover tightly and chill. Let rise until doubled in size before baking, 2½–3½ hours. Bread can be made 3 days ahead; let cool completely before storing and keep tightly wrapped at room temperature.

Recipe courtesy of [Bon Appétit](#).



This Halloween, don't let sweet treats haunt your teeth! Cocofloss works like a Ghostbuster's proton pack to blast away creepy, cavity-causing bacteria! Our [12-piece Halloween Party Pack](#) keeps smiles shining brighter than Slimer and whiter than the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man!



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