



Halloween treat

Fresh, warm doughnuts: A tasty holiday tradition rises from the *Sunset* archives

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“**THE HALLOWE’EN SEASON** brings to mind witches and jack o’ lanterns, crunchy apples and tasty hot doughnuts,” wrote *Sunset* back in October of 1963. Witches, yes. Jack-o’-lanterns, okay. Apples, sure. But doughnuts?

Throughout the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s, *Sunset* paired doughnuts with Halloween. Everything from after-school doughnut parties to “frying tables” at evening events and the gentle reminder, “Don’t forget the doughnuts,” for a Halloween

brunch menu appeared in our pages.

Granted, doughnuts have always had a special connection with fall: During harvest season, cider mills (especially in the Northeast) frequently serve doughnuts made with apple cider to visitors, and in older times, autumn butchering yielded plenty of fresh lard for frying.

Digging a little, we learned that Irish immigrants, who brought many practices we now associate with Halloween to America, traditionally handed out “soul

cakes”—often currant-studded squares of bread or spiced yeast buns—on October 31 to visitors and beggars in exchange for prayers for the donor’s family dead.

Over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the holiday increasingly focused on children. Door-to-door begging morphed into trick or treating—and soul cakes, some theorize, into doughnuts. But food scares and sheer convenience led to a turn toward store-bought, packaged treats, and Halloween doughnuts, especially in the West, passed into obscurity.

We say it’s time to resurrect them. Truly fresh, homemade doughnuts are a revelation: ever so slightly crisp on the outside, light and cakelike inside, and still warm from cooking. They make cozy, comforting treats on a chilly, frightful night.

Rich refrigerator doughnuts (October 1963)

In 1963, Sunset could assume that readers knew a lot about both yeasted dough and frying. There are far fewer bread bakers and deep-fat fry cooks roaming Western kitchens today, so we’ve rewritten the recipe with modern kitchens in mind. Letting the dough rise overnight in the refrigerator gives these doughnuts a rich and slightly tangy flavor.

PREP AND COOK TIME 1 hour, plus at least 4 hours of chilling and rising time

MAKES 14 doughnuts, plus holes

NOTES Experienced cooks know that the best frying results from watching the food and paying attention to how it looks and sounds. That’s why this recipe contains guidelines for how the doughnuts should behave while frying. A candy or deep-fry thermometer is a great backup to measure the temperature of the oil. Alternatively, if you dip the wooden handle of a kitchen spoon or spatula into the hot oil, it should take 2 seconds for 350° oil to bubble vigorously around the wood; more time and the oil is too cool, less time and it’s too hot. But the most important thing to watch is how the doughnuts cook.

1 package (¼ oz.) active dry yeast
3¼ cups flour, divided, plus more for rolling and shaping

½ cup sugar

1 tsp. salt

1 egg, lightly beaten

½ cup butter, at room temperature

Vegetable oil for frying

1. In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in 1 cup warm water (95°–110°). Add 1½ cups flour, sugar, and salt. Beat for 2 minutes with an electric mixer or wooden spoon. Add egg and butter and gradually beat in remaining 1¾ cups flour by hand until the batter is smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate dough for at least 2 hours or up to overnight.

2. Turn dough out onto a well-floured board or counter. Roll dough ½ in. thick, flouring generously and turning dough 90° between rolls to keep it from sticking. Cut out rounds with a standard 2½-in. doughnut cutter. Alternatively, cut rounds with a 2½- or 3-in. round biscuit or cookie cutter, and cut out centers with a 1-in. round biscuit or cookie cutter. Place rounds and centers on 2 well-floured baking sheets at least 1 in. apart. Let dough rise in a warm place until slightly puffed, about 2 hours.

3. Put wire cooling racks over 2 empty baking sheets and set them near the stove. Pour oil into a large pot to a depth of 2 in. and heat to 325° to 350°. To get a feel for the method and how the dough should look and act, start by frying the holes. Working in batches of 6 to 8 holes and then 3 or 4 doughnuts, fry doughnuts until golden brown, turning once, about 1 minute each side. (Doughnuts should sink for 2 to 3 seconds before floating to the top; if they don’t sink, the oil is too hot. Also, if they take much more or less than 1 minute per side to cook, adjust oil temperature.) As doughnuts brown, transfer with a slotted spoon to racks. After the first batch, test a doughnut hole by breaking it open. It should be light and cakelike inside, not greasy. If it’s greasy, either the oil wasn’t hot enough or it cooked too long. Be sure to fry the doughnuts only until golden brown.

4. While doughnuts are still slightly warm, dip in sugar or, as directed to 1963 readers, in “your favorite butter frosting (either chocolate or orange is especially suitable for Hallowe’en).”

PER DOUGHNUT 280 CAL., 55% (153 CAL.) FROM FAT; 3.9 G PROTEIN; 17 G FAT (4.3 G SAT.); 29 G CARBO (1 G FIBER); 216 MG SODIUM; 27 MG CHOL. ■