



**Celia Manley, Realtor® Broker Associate**  
**Turn Key Properties**  
**601-214-3307 / 601-427-5088**  
**celia@celiamanley.com**  
**www.celiamanley.com**



*"Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned."*  
– Peter Marshall

## Exploring the Spooky History of Halloween

Source: [history.com](http://history.com)

Each year on October 31, people in the U.S. and several other countries around the world celebrate Halloween by dressing up in costumes, going trick-or-treating, and watching scary movies. But did you know that Halloween dates back over 2,000 years, to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in)? Here are some fun facts you may not have known about the holiday's history:

### Samhain

The Celts, who lived mostly in the areas that are now Ireland, the UK, and Northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1—a day that marked the end of the harvest and the beginning of the long, cold winter, during which death was more common. In honor of this transitional period, they celebrated Samhain on the night of October 31, when it was believed that the spirits of the dead returned to earth. While these spirits were believed to cause trouble and damage crops, the Celts also thought that their presence enabled the Druids (Celtic priests) to make prophecies about the future. These prophecies would provide a source of comfort throughout the winter.

To celebrate Samhain, the Celts would build bonfires, wear costumes that typically consisted of animal heads and skins, and make sacrifices to the deities in hopes of protecting themselves during the dark, brutal months ahead.

### Roman festivals

By 43 A.D., the Roman Empire had mostly conquered the Celts. During their 400-year rule, Samhain was combined with two Roman festivals: Feralia, which commemorated the passing of the dead, and a day to honor Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. Apples were the symbol of Pomona, which may explain the origins of the modern-day tradition of bobbing for apples on Halloween.

### All Saints' Day

As Christianity spread into Celtic territory during the 9th century, it blended with older Celtic rituals. In 1000 A.D., the church declared November 2 All Souls' Day, which is widely believed to have been an effort to replace Celtic celebrations of the dead with a similar, church-sanctioned holiday. As with Samhain, All Souls' Day was observed with bonfires and costumes of devils, saints, and angels. The holiday was also called All-Hallows, and the night before it eventually came to be known as All-Hallows Eve or Halloween.

### Modern times

In early American history, European Halloween practices combined with the beliefs and customs of the Native Americans to create a new, distinctive version of Halloween, which included the telling of ghost stories and all types of mischief. However, the holiday was not celebrated everywhere in the country until late in the 19th century, when a wave of new immigrants—particularly those fleeing the Irish Potato Famine—helped popularize Halloween nationwide.



# Spicy Pumpkin Leek Soup

Source: [onceuponachef.com](http://onceuponachef.com)

## Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2.5 pounds leeks, white and light green parts only, washed well and thinly sliced (about 6 cups)
- 4 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 (15-oz) can pumpkin purée
- 1 apple, peeled, cored, and roughly chopped
- 6 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 5 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1-1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/8 - 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, to taste
- 1-1/2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme, plus more for garnish

## Directions:

- Melt the butter in a medium soup pot over medium heat. Add the leeks and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 10 minutes.
- Add the pumpkin, apple, broth, maple syrup, salt, cumin, cayenne pepper, thyme and sage. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes more.
- Add the heavy cream. Use a stick blender to purée the soup until completely smooth. (Alternatively, cool the soup slightly and use a blender to purée in batches. Be sure to remove the center knob on the blender and cover with a dishtowel to avoid splatters.) Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with a swirl of cream (see note below) and fresh thyme leaves, if desired.
- Note: To add a swirl of cream that floats on top of the soup, whip a few tablespoons of cream with a whisk until ever so slightly thickened. Then use a teaspoon to drizzle and swirl the cream over the soup.



## Pros and Cons of Hosting an Open House

Sources: [bobvilla.com](http://bobvilla.com) & [rochesterrealestateblog.com](http://rochesterrealestateblog.com)

Open houses have long been considered a staple in the process of selling a home. But many sellers have wondered if open houses are still worth the effort. While your realtor will be able to offer the most timely guidance based on the market and trends in your area, here are a few pros and cons of hosting an open house to consider:

### Pros:

- Maximize exposure for your home. The most significant advantage of hosting an open house is that it spreads the word that your home is on the market. Various people may attend—ranging from nosy neighbors to serious buyers—which increases the chances of the right buyer learning about your home. Even the process of promoting an open house through ads and street signs will help maximize visibility.
- Provide a low-pressure browsing experience for buyers. Open houses allow a wide range of potential buyers, including those not working with a realtor, to tour your home with little to no pressure. In this more relaxed environment, buyers can take their time to explore and determine what they like about your home.

### Cons:

- Low chances of a sale. While several people may attend an open house, the reality is that many of them are likely to be unqualified or not serious as potential buyers. Open houses are valuable for gaining exposure when your home is on the market, but it is rare that they directly result in an offer.
- Security concerns. With multiple strangers wandering through the open house, it can be difficult for your agent to monitor everyone at all times, leading to the risk of theft or vandalism.



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