Produce Business Unit, October 2004 NEWSFLASH

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~ History of the Jack-O-Lantern ~

People have been making jack-o-lanterns at Halloween for centuries. The practice originated from an Irish myth about a man nicknamed "Stingy Jack." According to the story, Stingy Jack invited the Devil to have a drink with him. True to his name, Stingy Jack didn't want to pay for his drink, so he convinced the Devil to turn himself into a coin that Jack could use to buy their drinks. Once the Devil did so, Jack decided to keep the money and put it into his pocket next to a silver cross, which prevented the Devil from changing back into his original form. Jack eventually freed the Devil, under the condition that he would not bother Jack for one year and that, should Jack die, he would not claim his soul. The next year, Jack again tricked the Devil into climbing into a tree to pick a piece of fruit. While he was up in the tree, Jack carved a sign of the cross into the tree's bark so that the Devil could not come down until the Devil promised Jack not to bother him for ten more years.

Soon after, Jack died. As the legend goes, God would not allow such an unsavory figure into heaven. The Devil, upset by the trick Jack had played on him and keeping his word not to claim his soul, would not allow Jack into hell. He sent Jack off into the dark night with only a burning coal to light his way. Jack put the coal into a carved out turnip and has been roaming the Earth with it ever since. The Irish began to refer to this ghostly figure as "Jack of the Lantern," and then, simply "Jack O'Lantern."

In Ireland and Scotland, people began to make their own versions of Jacks lanterns by carving scary faces into turnips or potatoes and placing them into windows or near doors to frighten away Stingy Jack and other wandering evil spirits. In England, large beets are used. Immigrants from these countries brought the jack o' lantern tradition with them when they came to the United States. They soon found that pumpkins, a fruit native to America, make perfect jack o' lanterns.

Source: The History Channel
http://www.historychannel.com/exhibits/halloween/pumpkin.html

Pumpkin Dessert Dip

1 pkg. (8 oz.) Cream Cheese, softened
1 jar (7 oz.) Marshmallow Creme
1/2 cup canned pumpkin
1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg

MIX all ingredients until well blended; cover. Refrigerate several hours or until chilled. SERVE with assorted fruit or graham crackers

Source: www.kraft.com

How about those pumpkins!

- Pumpkin flowers are edible.
- Pumpkins are members of the vine crops family called curbits.
- Pumpkins are 90 percent water.
- Pumpkins are fruit.
- Native Americans flattened strips of pumpkins, dried them and made mats.
- Native Americans called pumpkins "isqoutm squash."
- Native Americans used pumpkin seeds for food and medicine.

~ Pumpkin Nutrition Facts ~

(1 cup cooked, boiled, drained, without salt)
Calories 49
Protein 2 grams
Carbohydrate 12 grams
Dietary Fiber 3 grams
Calcium 37 mg
Iron 1.4 mg
Magnesium 22 mg
Potassium 564 mg Zinc 1 mg
Selenium .50 mg
Vitamin C 12 mg
Niacin 1 mg
Folate 21 mcg
Vitamin A 2650 IU
Vitamin E 3 mg

http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/pumpkins/nutrition.html

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~ Upcoming events ~

- October 15-20, 2004
  PMA Anaheim, CA

Good Eats This Week:

Check out the *FRUIT* that is available in good to excellent quality:

Apples: Braeburn, Fuji, Gala, Gold Delicious, Granny Smith, Jona Gold, McIntosh, Red Delicious, Red Rome
Cantaloupes
Grapes, Black, Red, White
Honeydew
Kiwifruit
Lemons
Nectarines
Oranges
Peaches
Pears: Asian Russet, Bartletts, Bosc, Asian Russet, D`Anjou, Stark Crimson, Comice, Seckel, Forelle,
Plums: Black, Red
Strawberries

Check out the *Veggies* that are available in good to excellent quality:

Asparagus
Artichokes
Broccoli Crowns
Cabbage: Green, Red
Cauliflower
Celery, and Celery Hearts
Corn: Yellow, White and Bicolor
Cucumbers
Green Beans
Lettuce, Iceberg, Leaf
Okra
Onions: Peru Imports, Red, White, Yellow
Peppers, Green Bell
Potatoes, Baking, Red, Sweet, White
Radish: Red
Squash, Zucchini and Yellow
Tomatoes

~ October is National Apple Month ~

Actually a 90-day event, National Apple Month runs from the beginning of September through the end of November. Celebrate the event by sampling apple cider next to the apple display.

Take advantage of the season by giving consumers plenty of varieties to choose from. Smaller retailers should display at least seven varieties at a time, larger stores about 12. Clearly separate and label each variety to reduce customer handling.

Source: Produce Merchandising Sep 2004

~ The Cost of Cheap Food ~

This year American consumers will spend 10% of their househould dispoable income on food - a lower precentage than any country in the world. As Americans, we are told that cheap and abundant food is the backbone of a thriving economy. The fact is that cheap food often comes at a cost that is often not reflected in the supermarket price tag. Farming communities struggle. The environment suffers. And our overall public health gets compromised when price takes prcedent over quality and safety.

Source: www.agobservatory.org

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Q: What's the ratio of a pumpkin's circumference to its diameter?

A: Pumpkin Pi.

Field Office Showcase:

DSO-Jacksonville has had a trying time as of late. I am referring to the Hurricane Season of 2004. This office and its` staff went through a six week period of storms that devastated the State of Florida and continued to cause problems on the entire Gulf and East Coast.

Tropical Storm Bonnie was our first visitor. It dropped massive amounts of rain and spun off tornadoes that hit our local Terminal Market. We had vendors displaced for days and product that could not be replaced on time. Working with our customers and vendors we managed to get all deliveries made and most items covered.

This crisis mode we found ourselves working in became the norm for the next several weeks. We were hit with Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne. The DSO staff, vendors, and consolidator worked through power outages, flooding, communication interruptions, water, fuel and ice shortages to name a few, travel delays, evacuations, and in some cases extreme damage to fill the orders of the customers who were themselves affected. The office, vendors, customers and consolidator were having to open and close at the whim of the storms. Not all areas were influenced at the same time so we worked from home or evacuation sites as needed and when possible.

The storm damage will remain with us for a while. Schools are still closed in many districts, power is still weeks away from being restored in some areas and not all businesses and homes will be rebuilt. Our work in produce is just beginning. Many of the crops we receive during our busiest time of year have been damaged or delayed. Now is the time that we must prove to ourselves just how good we are.

A Safer you:

~ Hand Surgeons Warn of Pumpkin Carving Dangers ~

- *Carve at a Clean, Dry, Well-lit Area*

Wash and thoroughly dry all of the tools that you will use to carve the pumpkin: carving tools, knife, cutting surface, and your hands. Any moisture on your tools, hands, or table can cause slipping that can lead to injuries.

- *Leave the Carving to Adults*

Never let children do the carving. Let kids draw a pattern on the pumpkin and have them be responsible for cleaning out the inside pulp and seeds. When the adults do start cutting, they should always cut away from themselves and cut in small, controlled strokes.

- *Sharper is not Better*

A sharper knife is not necessarily better because it often becomes wedged in the thicker part of the pumpkin, requiring force to remove it. An injury can occur if your hand is in the wrong place when the knife finally dislodges from the thick skin of the pumpkin. Injuries are also sustained when the knife slips and comes out the other side of the pumpkin where your hand may be holding it steady.

- *Use a Pumpkin Carving Kit*

Special pumpkin carving kits are available in stores and include small serrated pumpkin saws that work better because they are less likely to get stuck in the thick pumpkin tissue. If they do get jammed and then wedged free, they are not sharp enough to cause a deep, penetrating cut

Source: American Society for Surgery of the Hand - http://www.assh.org