

## A Halloween Bash Made Memorable for Food Allergic Kids

By Barb Nicoletti - One of frustrating things I encounter as a mom is knowing that when we go to a party, most likely there will not be anything for my food allergic children to eat. Time after time we have attended a function and the only food that was safe for them to eat was a bag of potato chips. Like most food allergic mom's I learn to plan ahead. Packing drinks, sandwiches, snacks and even more snacks just in case I am running late ... This year my daughter entered kindergarten. This meant a new school and new food challenges that came along with her becoming a big girl. So when I was asked to be part of this year's Halloween Party committee, how could I refuse ...

When I signed on, I had no idea what they were looking for in a volunteer. Evidently, our school has a huge bash; haunted house, fortune tellers, dance, arts and crafts, trick or treating and of course FOOD. They were looking for volunteers to solicit food donations. I was determined to make this function different from all the other parties we have attended. I was going to make sure that there was treats there for both of my children to enjoy as well as so many other food allergic children in our school. In preschool, my children were the only children with food allergies, but in this new school, my daughter is among the growing population of the food challenged.

So, with 3 weeks to go to the big bash, I needed to get to work. I started with merchants that I have dealt with in the past. Much to my surprise most of the merchants I spoke with were more than happy to help out. As I kept going with the donation request, I was overwhelmed by how many food allergy companies out there were willing to help make this party special for so many children. I did also request donations from merchants in the area that did not cater to the food allergic, and they were most generous as well.

So this past Friday night, I dressed my little goblins in their costumes and off we went to the party. When we arrived, I was taken back by just how much food and goodies these companies donated. I had several food allergic moms stop me to find out about the vendors and the food they donated. Not to mention how excited they were when they arrived to see treats that their child could actually eat.

My son was so excited that he could actually eat cookies and chocolates like all the other kids. He was on a sugar high for several hours.

Divvies makes these fantastic cookies packaged in twos that all the children loved. They ate them up. Like their cupcakes, Divvies Chocolate Chip Cookies are in a different league. Definitely not the crumbly cookies you get out of a package at the supermarket. They are soft, moist and most of all great tasting. Divvies went above and beyond, donating a great deal of their time and products to help make our party a success. Divvies has made 2 occasions for my family in the past 4 months memorable ones. If you are looking for safe great snacks for your children or yourself, I highly recommend taking a few moments to view their website <http://www.divvies.com/>.

I also contacted the Chocolate Emporium, after discovering that they create chocolates, which are free from dairy, egg, nuts and gluten. It was a perfect fit for this occasion. I had not seen the products they sent until I arrived at the party. I was blown away. I was expecting hard sugar sucker lollipops. The chocolate lollipops they sent were full size solid chocolate pops. Tons of them, I was really shocked. These pops were a huge hit, rich, creamy and of course yummy. My son kept looking around for more. Definitely a place I plan to order more candy from in the future. The Chocolate Emporium has a great selection of chocolates to choose from for many different occasions. They can be viewed and purchased from their website at <http://www.choclat.com/>

I also received donations from Amanda's Own Confections. I have ordered chocolates in the past from them. As young as my son is, he knew what that brown package was at the door when we came home last week. He ran up to the box, and could hardly contain himself. After telling him they were for the School Party, he was highly disappointed, but knew he would have some at the end of the week. This was his first stop when we arrived at the party. After about 1 hour the only thing left on the table was 1 or 2 brochures and an empty basket. Amanda's has a great selection of chocolates to choose from. Their chocolates are cute, good-sized, tasty, and well priced. View Amanda's selection of attractive chocolates, gummies, and jelly beans at <http://www.amandasown.com/>.

Another Chocolatier that donated was Vermont Nut Free Chocolate. They were actually the first to respond. They sent mini nut free chocolate bars for all the kids to enjoy. I received a lot of feedback and the results of these chocolates were unbelievable. These chocolates like the others were rich, creamy and tasted oh so good. Browse their great array of creative sports chocolates, boxed items and chocolate bars at [www.vermontnutfree.com](http://www.vermontnutfree.com)

Parents, children, food-allergic and non, everyone loved all of the great treats that were provided by these companies. I was asked this afternoon to be on the Halloween Committee for the next 6 years (until my children leave the school and head off to middle school) to help coordinate the food that everyone can enjoy.

I could not have done it without the help and kind-heartedness of such wonderful people. The customer service that I have received from Divvies, The Chocolate Emporium, Amanda's Own Confections and Vermont Nut Free Chocolates was exceptional. I could not ask for anything more.

Thank you again for your generosity. ~ Barb Nicoletti