

# Trick or Treat?

by Karen Zhang

Karen in America



If you asked an American what the most celebrated holidays in the US were, Halloween would have to be one of the top answers. I've been told that this pumpkin-and-ghost themed holiday has become, in recent years, more and more popular, and that celebrations start earlier and earlier.

Look, in mid-August you can see some stores in the US have already put the Halloween products—haunted house toys, candies and pumpkin baskets—on the shelves. By September, you can't miss Halloween decoration in the restaurants and small bookstores. In pharmacies, the Halloween colors of orange and red dominate the aisles for stationary and cards.

In my first October of studying in America, I had a chance to visit a farm outside of Pittsburgh with other international students. I was shocked to see huge pumpkins scattered on the ground at one side of the entrance. These pumpkins were so much bigger than the ones in China. Some were gigantic enough to serve as a stool for three slim Asian students.

It's American tradition to decorate their

doorsteps and yards and even inside the house with pumpkins and squashes. The squashes have various shapes and colors; some look really ugly. The common ones include turban, sweet dumpling, carnival, gold acorn, delicata, buttercup and gold nugget.

At first I was in disbelief that Americans didn't eat the huge pumpkins. You would think at this harvest time it makes sense to appreciate big pumpkins at the dining table. But no. Several

American friends told me the big pumpkins taste sour, no good. The small ones may be made into pumpkin soup and pies.

I'm not surprised that Halloween has also become known in China, catching up with the fame of Christmas. If any holiday can create a source of moneymaking, business people are always eager to overly commercialize it. Same as in America. On the evening of October 31<sup>st</sup>, when I see the kids in all sorts of costumes knocking on the neighbors' doors for treats, I wonder how many treats the manufacturers have gained from Halloween. No trick at all! 

