

Gable Pines

Who's There?



Knock knock. Who's there? October 31st. October 31st who? Did you know that October 31st is Knock-Knock Joke Day? It is no coincidence that this holiday coincides with Halloween. As children rove door-to-door asking "Trick or treat," they can offer knock-knock jokes as compensation for their candy and goodies.

The origin of the knock-knock joke is anything but clear-cut, but clever historians have uncovered bits of American popular culture that present a convoluted history of its creation. Before the knock-knock joke, there was the "Do You Know" joke. Around the year 1900, it was common for joke tellers to ask something like, "Do you know Arthur?" To which the person would reply, "Arthur who?" The jokester would then reveal the punchline: "Arthurmometer!" This groan-worthy punchline, with its silly play on words, foreshadowed the sort of punchlines knock-knock jokes would become famous for. But where did the door-knocking imagery come from?

In 1929, author Henry Bett wrote the book *The Games of Children: Their Origin and History*. In it, Bett describes a common game called "Buff" in which a player would tap with a stick and say "Knock knock," to which another player would respond, "Who's there?" Is it coincidence that by the mid-1930s the joke form and the children's game had been combined? Knock-knock jokes were suddenly everywhere. Businesses held knock-knock joke contests. Bands incorporated knock-knock jokes into their songs. In 1936, the nomination of Col. Frank Knox as the Republican vice-presidential candidate inspired radio stations and newspapers in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to tell Knox-Knox jokes.

Meanwhile, the *Kerrville Times* newspaper in Texas expressed sheer bafflement over the knock-knock joke phenomenon: "Who started it, where, and what it is called is a mystery." At the end of 1936, psychologist D.A. Laird called the compulsion to tell knock-knock jokes a mania and a sickness.

October Birthdays

In astrology, those born from October 1–23 balance the scales of Libra. Libras are peaceful and fair, and value balance and symmetry. For this reason, they often champion justice and equality. Those born from October 24–31 are Scorpions of Scorpio. Scorpions are passionate, dedicated, and resourceful. Scorpions may seem intimidating, but they are just no-nonsense people who value honesty and loyalty above all else.

Donna Karan (designer) – Oct. 2, 1948
 Chubby Checker (singer) – Oct. 3, 1941
 Chevy Chase (comedian) – Oct. 8, 1943
 Henry Heinz (food magnate) – Oct. 11, 1844
 Marie Osmond (entertainer) – Oct. 13, 1959
 Penny Marshall (director) – Oct. 15, 1943
 Naomi Osaka (tennis star) – Oct. 16, 1997
 Kamala Harris (vice president) – Oct. 20, 1964
 Pele (soccer player) – Oct. 23, 1940
 Jonas Salk (doctor) – Oct. 28, 1914
 John Candy (comedian) – Oct. 31, 1950

Turn of the Tide



In Cornwall, in the United Kingdom, October 31 brings the holiday of Allantide. Like Halloween, Allantide is believed to be a day when the barrier between the living and the dead is lifted. For this reason, Allantide is a day when people seek the advice of fortune tellers who can commune with the spirits. Walnuts thrown into fires confirm the fidelity of spouses. Molten lead cast into water hardens into a shape that foretells future employment. Thanks to its proximity to the harvest season, Allantide also boasts several harvest traditions. It is common to visit an Allan Market and buy a bright red Allan apple to gift to children. Girls will sleep with these under their pillows in the hopes of dreaming of their future husbands. Not sleeping with the Allan apple under your pillow brings back luck. Another tradition more reminiscent of Halloween is the carving of jack-o'-lanterns out of turnips.

Celebrating October

Country Music Month

Stamp Collecting Month

Positive Attitude Month

International Coffee Day

October 1

World Space Week

October 4–10

World Teachers Day

October 5

Columbus Day & Indigenous Peoples' Day

October 11

Wear Something Gaudy Day

October 17

Freedom of Speech Week

October 18–24

World Origami Days

October 24–November 11

Cranky Coworkers Day

October 27

All Hallows' Eve or Halloween

October 31

Mission ImpASTable

In 1995, pasta producers from all over the world convened in Rome for the first World Pasta Congress. It was decided that October 25 would be designated World Pasta Day, a day to celebrate the versatility and sheer deliciousness of this global food.

In 2005, archaeologists unearthed 4,000-year-old noodles from a site in China, confirming the belief that the Chinese likely invented the first pastas made of grain and water. These noodles were not like the dried, flour-based pastas we find at grocery stores today, but were made of millet, a grain more like rice than wheat. Does this discovery prove that the Italian merchant Marco Polo brought pasta from China to Italy in 1295? Not quite. While it is very likely that Marco Polo brought Chinese noodles and all kinds of Chinese artifacts back to Italy, pasta was already a common staple in and around the Mediterranean long before Marco Polo's travels east.

Historians think it is far more likely that Italy's famous pastas originated in the Middle East. Written records show that by the fifth century, Arabs were eating *itriyah*, a dough made of flour and water that could be rolled thin, cut into strips, dried, and reconstituted with water. Arab traders traveling the famed Silk Road could easily pack and store this nutritious staple. As the Arabs expanded westward into the Mediterranean, going so far as to conquer Sicily and southern Italy around the year 900, they likely introduced their version of pasta to the region.

In Italy, pasta became both a mass-produced food staple and an art form. Southern Italy's dry, sunny climate was conducive to the growing of hard durum wheat and allowed for the proper drying of long strands of pasta. Tomatoes, another southern Italian staple, would provide the base for many delectable pasta sauces. Innovative pasta makers would devise over 350 unique pasta shapes, each designed to hold and enhance its own sauce. Over centuries of culinary perfectionism, pasta would become a beloved food consumed on every continent of the globe, worthy of its own holiday.

Now We're Cooking

October is Cookbook Month, which means it's time to get into the kitchen and dust off those pots and pans. With an almost infinite number of free recipes available online, cookbooks might seem a thing of the past. Yet while many forms of print media have suffered in the digital age, cookbooks have maintained their popularity and sales are booming.



How have cookbooks maintained such popularity? They are often part autobiography of the cooks who write them and part self-help for those who struggle in the kitchen, and they almost always

lead to a happy and delicious ending. Even for seasoned chefs, cookbooks provide a means of reinvigorating a stale cooking routine or learning some new tricks of the trade. This doesn't mean that you should go out and buy Buck Peterson's *Road Kill Cookbook* (unless you want to whip up his signature "Chili Con Carnage"), but you could explore some of these other unique and innovative options.

Last Dinner on the Titanic features a compilation of recipes that were served on that great and ill-fated ocean liner. A ten-course menu featuring oysters, caviar, Lobster Thermidor, Consommé Olga, filet mignon, roast squab, pate de foie gras, and Waldorf pudding was served the very night the iceberg was struck, and recipes for all these dishes and more are found in the cookbook.

When *Microwave Cooking for One* was published in 1999, some reviewers called it the "world's saddest cookbook," but others called its author, Marie T. Smith, "the veritable high priestess of microwave food preparation." Smith demonstrates that the microwave is not merely for reheating leftovers but can prepare everything from pancakes to fried scallops and peach soufflé.

Adventurous foodies could try *Bugs for Beginners*. Historians might like *Cooking Apicius*, recipes from ancient Rome. Mechanics will appreciate *Manifold Destiny*, which teaches how to cook on your car engine. There is truly a cookbook that appeals to every possible taste.

Hats Off

You don't have to be a fan of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to celebrate Mad Hatter Day on October 6. Carroll attempted to illustrate his book himself but soon turned to famed illustrator John Tenniel for help. It was Tenniel who depicted the Mad Hatter character with a card in his hatband reading, "In this size 10/6." Here, the 10/6 refers not to the date October 6, but the hat's price of 10 shillings and six pence. While the interpretation of the hat card may have been mistaken, the hatter's "madness" is a matter of historical fact.

In the mid-19th century, the process of turning fur into felt involved the use of the chemical mercury nitrate, a poison that caused shakes, speech problems, unpredictable behavior, and hallucinations in many hatters. The idiom "mad as a hatter" developed as a result. Of course, one needn't be mad to celebrate this offbeat holiday. Instead, enjoy Lewis Carroll's classic novel of fantasy and nonsense, and perhaps engage in some nonsensical antics yourself.

Alien Visitor



On October 19, 2017, astronomer Robert Weryk was using a telescope at Hawaii's

Haleakala Observatory when he noticed something strange, an object perhaps 3,000 feet long and 500 feet wide traveling away from the sun out of our solar system. The object was called *Oumuamua*, a Hawaiian term meaning "scout." Astronomers first called it a comet and then an asteroid but soon realized that it was neither. *Oumuamua* became the first known interstellar object to visit our solar system, an object not bound to any orbit or any particular star. After its discovery, some theorized that it was a nitrogen iceberg or a broken shard of a distant planet. Others went so far as to speculate that it was an alien listening device! But, as Carl Sagan said, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence," which we do not yet have.

Bigfoot's Big Moment

In 1958, a northern California newspaper published a letter in which local loggers described their discovery of massive 16-inch-long footprints in the California wilderness. The loggers called the unknown creature who had left the prints "Big Foot," and readers of the newspaper became instantly fascinated with the story. That local story, originally published as a fun, Sunday morning entertainment piece, spread to newspapers across the country. Quite suddenly, the legend of Bigfoot was born. It wasn't until October 20, 1967, that the Bigfoot legend reached a fever pitch.

Two rodeo cowboys from Yakima, Washington, Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin, ventured into the northern California wilderness in the hopes of capturing hard evidence of the creature. Patterson had long held a fascination with the mysterious Bigfoot. He had spent much of the previous decade interviewing Bigfoot believers, compiling their stories, and exploring and mapping the creature's supposed territories. Despite Patterson's earnest belief in Bigfoot's existence, no one was more shocked than he when he and Gimlin stumbled upon a large, hairy, bipedal, apelike figure stomping through northern California's remote forests.



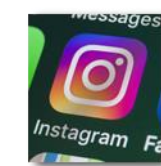
Patterson was able to dismount his horse and film Bigfoot for about a minute, capturing the now-famous shot of Bigfoot midstride. He and Gimlin tracked the creature for a few miles and made plaster casts of its massive footprints before losing it. The men believed that they had struck Bigfoot gold, that they possessed the evidence needed to prove Bigfoot's existence. The scientific community, however, was not impressed with the footage. Many believed the film had been a hoax and Bigfoot just a man in a costume. Yet other scientists have trouble debunking the film and dismissing its veracity. For the rest of their lives, Patterson and Gimlin argued that their experience and the film were genuine, giving hope to the many Bigfoot believers worldwide.

Don't Be Scared

Each October, scarecrows begin to appear in and around the village of Pietrebais in Belgium. In some years, hundreds of scarecrows appear. In others, a scant dozen or fewer. No one knows why or how the tradition began 21 years ago in the year 2000, but it is a tradition that has continued ever since.

In the 1500s, it was common for farmers to hire guards to protect their crops from animal pests and thieves. The guards sometimes slept in the fields in straw huts or stood watch on wooden platforms. But as farms grew, farmers could no longer afford to employ vast numbers of guards. They began instead to use human-like watchers. These first scarecrows were erected in the spring, topped with animal skulls or fashioned out of rotting vegetables, or hung on crosses in the image of Christ's crucifixion. They served one purpose: to scare pests like crows away from valuable crops. It seems that these scarecrows have earned a spooky reputation ever since. But in Belgium, there is no need to fear. The scarecrows are often dressed like happy or silly villagers welcoming visitors to Pietrebais.

Instant Success



The photo and video-sharing social media application known as Instagram enjoyed a fairy-tale launch when it debuted on October 6, 2010. Developers

created it in just eight weeks, and on its first day it had 25,000 users. In less than two years, Facebook bought it for \$1 billion, making it one of the most profitable applications ever developed. Facebook may have more users, but Instagram is still considered one of social media's most popular and profitable applications. This is because of the ease with which users can share photos and videos. Instagram is not cluttered with links, sidebars, ads, and endless chatting. Such a visual medium is perfectly suited for smartphones and users on the go.