



# October 2009

Volume 1, Issue 6

Halloween is a holiday celebrated on October 31. It has roots in the Celtic festival of Samhain and the Christian holy day of All Saints' Day. It is largely a secular celebration, but some Christians and pagans have expressed strong feelings about its religious overtones.



Irish immigrants carried versions of the tradition to North America during Ireland's Great Famine of 1846.

In 731 A.D., November 1 was declared All Saints' Day (All Hallows Day). October 31 thus

## Columbus Day

Many countries in the New World and elsewhere celebrate the anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas, which occurred on October 12, 1492 in the Julian calendar and October 21, 1492 in the modern Gregorian calendar, as an official holiday. The day is celebrated as Columbus Day in the United States, in many countries in Latin America, in Costa Rica, in The Bahamas, and as National Day in Spain.

Columbus Day became an official state holiday in Colorado in 1905, and became a federal holiday in 1970. People have ritually remembered Columbus beginning at least in the Colonial period. Since 1971, the holiday has been commemorated in the U.S. on the second Monday in October, the same day as Thanksgiving in Canada.

During the 400-year anniversary in 1892, teachers, preachers, poets and politicians

became All Hallows Eve, in time shortened to "Halloween."

On All Hallows' eve, the ancient Celts would place a skeleton on their window sill to represent the departed.

Originating in Europe, the Halloween lanterns were first carved from a turnip or rutabaga. Believing that the head was the most powerful part of the body, containing the spirit and the knowledge, the Celts used the "head" of the vegetable to frighten off the embodiment of superstitions.

Halloween, perhaps our weirdest annual celebration,

unlike the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving, it is neither patriotic nor historical, yet it is celebrated nationally. Unlike Christmas, Easter or Passover, Halloween is not associated with a particular religion. Yet it weaves spirituality, death and religious beliefs into our present and historical imaginations.



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used Columbus Day rituals to teach ideals of patriotism. These patriotic rituals were framed around themes such as support for war, citizenship boundaries, the importance of loyalty to the nation, and celebrating social progress. Columbus Day is a patriotic holiday. In fact, the Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892 in honor of the 400th anniversary of his first voyage. That year, President Benjamin Harrison declared Columbus Day a legal holiday.

Columbus died in Valladolid, Spain, on May 20 at age 54. No one is sure where he is buried. Some scholars believe his remains are in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic while others believe they re in Spain in the Cathedral of Seville.

# Around the world...



## D is for Dominican Republic

D.R. is a country on the island of Hispaniola located in the Caribbean region. The country shares the island with Haiti. The Dominican Republic has a culture mixed with Spanish, French, Haitian, and African influences. Christopher Columbus described this land as "a beautiful island paradise with high forested mountains and large river valleys". This statement is still as true today as it was in 1492.

In addition to the comforts of sun, sea, and sand, the Dominican Republic offers an exciting and unique cultural experience that will charm your senses. Outdoor activities like golf, snorkeling, windsurfing, kite boarding, and boating are ways to experience the natural beauty of the land and sea. The Dominican Republic has become the Caribbean's largest tourist destination.

With over two-dozen national parks, other quieter options for enjoying nature like hiking and bird watching are also available.

Musically, the Dominican Republic is known for the creation of the musical style called *merengue*, a

type of lively, fast-paced music. Merengue is usually played with



drums, brass and chorded instruments, as well as some elements unique to the music style of the Dominican Republic.

*Do not follow where the path may lead.*

*Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Birthdays

Joel Garza - Oct 1

Brian Wright - Oct 2

James Hatter - Oct 10

Milton Scranton - Oct 17

Dana Squibb - Oct 18

Ken Broussard - Oct 18

Raymond Collum - Oct 18

Miguel Gonzalez - Oct 19

Jose Sepulveda - Oct 21

Francisco Montoya - Oct 23



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Capital:** Santo Domingo

**Climate:** Maritime semitropical, with an average yearly temperature of 80 F

**Currency:** Dominican peso

**Population:** 9,760,000 (2007)

**Ethnic groups:** European - 16%

African origin - 11%

Mixed - 73%

**Independence:** February 27, 1844 (from Haiti)

**Language:** Spanish



## Employment Anniversaries

Joel Garza - 4 years

Leah Alford - 3 years

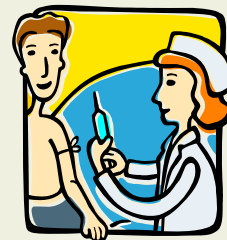
Rosalie Gillaspie - 2 years

Delores Orosco - 2 years



**A**s you are aware, the new vaccine for the H1N1 (swine) flu virus will be available soon. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) has implemented a policy to cover the administration of the vaccine for members of our fully insured health plans without regard to whether their current plan covers vaccinations. BCBS will cover this administration fee without applying it to their deductible or coinsurance. This communication relates to the H1N1 flu previously called swine flu) vaccine only.

## Healthy Living Healthy Living



**C**overage for other vaccines will be in accordance with the individual's plan. In order to benefit from this special coverage, a member must receive the vaccination from a BCBSTX network provider. When using a provider that is not in the BCBSTX network, normal benefit coverage will apply. This coverage will be available for the five priority populations the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends receive the vaccine first:

1. Pregnant women
2. People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
3. Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
4. Persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years
5. People ages 25 through 64 years who have chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems. Additional information about the H1N1 vaccine and helpful materials for employers can be found on the CDC Web site at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

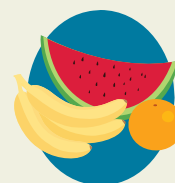
## A Healthy Diet Might Keep the Flu Bug Away

**W**ith this year's flu season already here, and expected to be widespread, it's important to try to keep the flu bug away with healthy nutrition. While maintaining a healthy diet is a year-round endeavor, good nutrition is even more important during the colder months when the flu and colds are more common.

**W**here do you fit on the nutrition-conscious continuum? If you're one of the folks who needs to fine-tune what you put on your plate, try some of the tips below to upgrade your eating habits. And even if you think you're already doing everything you can to eat right, there may be a few things you haven't considered to boost your nutrition know-how. You probably know fruit and vegetables should figure in your diet, but just how much of these foods should you be eating every day?

**T**he Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Web site, [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov), features a handy interactive calculator that serves up answers based on age, gender and level of physical activity. Just type in your age, select "male" or "female" and indicate whether your level of activity (above and beyond light everyday activities) is less than 30 minutes each day, between 30 and 60 minutes or more than 60 minutes. Then click on *Show Me* to bring up the CDC's recommendations.

**W**hile fresh fruits and vegetables are especially appealing, the CDC notes that "canned, dried and frozen fruits and vegetables are also good options" and recommends selecting fruits without added sugar or syrups and vegetables without added salt, butter or cream



sauces.

**T**he site offers suggestions for adding fruits and vegetables to your diet at breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack time. Among them:

- Stir low-fat or fat-free granola into a bowl of low-fat or fat-free yogurt; top with sliced apples or berries.
- Have fruit as a mid-morning snack.
- Top toasted whole-grain bread with peanut butter and sliced bananas.
- Add chopped vegetables such as bell peppers, broccoli, spinach, mushrooms or tomatoes to an omelet.
- Top waffles, pancakes, cereal, oatmeal or toast with strawberries, blueberries or bananas.