

Making Ripples

Halloween: Scarier for Slaves

by Amanda Bancroft

Taste buds do not have more rights than humans do, but a global perspective on world economics portrays a different story. If we flew around the world, we'd see approximately 15,000 enslaved children on the Ivory Coast producing chocolate treats for children in the United States to enjoy at Halloween, according to Wikipedia. When we purchase non-fair-trade candy bars with the excuse that "they're cheap," that's the same excuse companies are using to enslave children – their labor is indeed cheap. Does this mean we have to become so ridden by guilt that excuses for slavery actually start to sound legitimate? Of course not. Our enjoyment of life is not dependent on child suffering – this isn't Le Guin's Omelas.

We have choices. We can shop locally or buy fair trade, or if fair trade is too expensive, save money by refraining from buying brands that cause harm. Visit the CNN Freedom Project to find info-graphics and specific investigations into the chocolate industry during the last two years.

If you want your kids to enjoy trick-or-treating but not learn to crave goodies which should really be called baddies, why not participate in Reverse Trick-or-Treating? Costumed trick-or-treaters go door-to-door educating others about child slavery in the chocolate industry, while giving out delicious fair trade chocolates (and eating them, too!). You can order a kit of 150 mini chocolate bars for \$24 from Equal Exchange by selecting "chocolate minis" in their product menu, and get recipes, stencils, and more at EqualExchange.Coop/FairTradeYourHalloween.

The companies that sell 90 million pounds of chocolate just during Halloween week alone depend on consumers spending \$1.9 billion for these products, helping them enslave children. Child exploitation requires us to believe that our little bag of candy doesn't do any harm; when everyone thinks that way, slavery perpetuates.

If you do enjoy treats that you know come at the expense of others, don't get depressed or defensive. You might say, "I'm going to enjoy the taste of this treat I already bought, not buy it again, and refrain from pretending that what I'm doing is harmless because that encourages others to care less." Making ripples at Halloween doesn't have to be scary. In fact, I find it more fun to enjoy some dark chocolate Justin's Peanut Butter Cups and know that I supported my local economy, helped people around the world, reduced my environmental impact, and educated others on how they can do the same.

Brand	Flavor
Equal Exchange Halloween Kit (V) (GF)	Milk or Dark Chocolate Minis
Dagoba Tasting Squares (GF)	Milk, Dark, Xocolatl, Lavender Blueberry
Endangered Species Bug Bites (V) (GF)	Milk or Dark Chocolate with Bug Info Card
Justin's Peanut Butter Cups (V) (GF)	Milk or Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter Cups
Divine Chocolate Coins	Milk or Dark Chocolate Coins

(V) – Vegan

(GF) – Gluten-Free

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