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Halloween Prep Countdown

What to make three weeks out, and what can wait until Saturday · 1 page

Work backwards, not forwards. Halloween 2026 is Saturday 31 October. Start at the party and walk back — and keep the day-of list to four items.

3 WEEKS OUT — Bake and freeze

- [ ] **Bake anything that keeps.** Halva bark keeps three weeks. Fave and ossi dei morti keep two. Pan dei morti keeps ten days.
- [ ] **Freeze raw, not baked.** Spanakopita, wrapped feta and stuffed dates all freeze raw on a tray and bake from frozen.
- [ ] **Do the specialist shop.** Black tahini, pomegranate molasses, squid ink, Aleppo pepper, phyllo.
- [ ] **Order anything that ships.** Candles, boards, serving dishes. Prices rise sharply in the last week of October.

1 WEEK OUT — Shop and batch

- [ ] **Finalise the guest count** and run the numbers. This is the moment to decide quantities, not the day before.
- [ ] **Buy all non-perishables.** Crackers, nuts, dried fruit, olives, jarred goods, drinks.
- [ ] **Make the drink base.** A syrup or juice base keeps a week.
- [ ] **Toast the nuts.** Four minutes, and they keep a week in a jar.
- [ ] **Char and freeze the flatbread.** Refresh in a hot oven for three minutes on the day.
- [ ] **Check your equipment.** Enough bowls? Enough small plates? A board big enough? Find out now, not Saturday afternoon.

3 DAYS OUT — Wednesday

- [ ] **Muhammara and beet dip go now.** Both genuinely improve over two to three days. This is technique, not convenience.
- [ ] **Black hummus** can go now or tomorrow.
- [ ] **Anything with yogurt or fresh herbs waits.** Whipped feta, tzatziki, green sauces — one day ahead at most.
- [ ] **Do the fresh shop.** Fruit, vegetables, cheese, dairy.

THE DAY BEFORE — Friday — the heavy day

- [ ] **Assemble everything wrapped, raw.** Anything going in the oven on the day should be sitting on a tray ready for it.
- [ ] **Make the whipped feta base** and any yogurt dips.
- [ ] **Batch the drink** in a jug, minus the sparkling element.
- [ ] **Prep, but do not cut, the fruit.** Wash grapes, check figs.
- [ ] **Set the table completely.** Cloth, candles unlit, plates, glasses, boards laid where they will go.
- [ ] **Clear the fridge. Empty the dishwasher. Take the bin out.**

HALLOWEEN MORNING — Keep it short

- [ ] **Cut the fruit.** Figs halved, citrus sliced, fennel sliced and held in cold water.
- [ ] **Deseed the pomegranate.**
- [ ] **Take the dips out** thirty minutes before you assemble anything. Cold dip is stiff and muted.
- [ ] **Refresh the flatbread** in a hot oven for three minutes.
- [ ] **Assemble the board** — minus the warm anchor and the final scatter — up to two hours before guests arrive.

THE FOUR THINGS THAT MUST BE MADE ON THE DAY

- [ ] **Anything fried.** Loukoumades, churros. A twenty-minute window that does not reopen.
- [ ] **Anything baked with crisp pastry.** Mummy feta, spanakopita. Assembled ahead, baked on the day.
- [ ] **Filled cannoli, and anything with a shell.** Shells go soft within an hour of filling.
- [ ] **Cut fruit and dressed salads.** Browning and wilting.

Everything else is a scheduling failure. If your day-of list is longer than four items, something on it can move.

Two hours is the safety limit, not the looks limit. Once it is out, anything with dairy or cooked vegetables should not stand more than two hours in total, and no more than one hour above 90°F. Keep half of each dip back and swap the bowl rather than topping it up — topping up resets nothing, because what is at the bottom has been out since the start.