smitten kitchen For about five minutes — before we remembered that we have an infant, a 6 year-old, two full-time jobs, a not very big apartment, an international business trip this month (sadly, not mine) are now doubting we are actually made of whatever is required to pull this off — we thought we might have a Friendsgiving dinner party this year. I love Thanksgiving and I want more of it in my life, ditto to friends and also dinner parties. Everything about this was going to awesome. I didn’t have to plan the menu to my perfect Thanksgiving dinner because I wrote it in my head probably five years ago and from what I hear, Alton Brown’s turkey recipe is the only one you’ll ever need. (Or should I dry brine? Or maybe this lacquered thing? Or maybe a mash-up of all of them? Or maybe just import a smoked one from Texas and be the most chilled out host in the history of Thanksgiving, ever, amiright?) Right, well, I had everything else planned out: And this is where the fun began. I decided that a new tradition required a new special cocktail that would forever be tied to a time and place. In general, I’m a classicist about sangria. Like most of us, I’ve endured all sorts of disturbing ingredients masquerading as sangria — Sprite, frozen lemonade, coconut rum, basil, a ton of sugar (whhhy) which are all ingredients I’ve pulled from just the first few Google results for sangria — and try not to mess with what’s always worked. But, it turned out, I didn’t have to upend tradition too obnoxiously to make the apple cider sangria of my dreams. For the red wine, I used a dry white. For the brandy, I used an apple brandy or Calvados. Instead of a splash of juice, I used apple cider, which I’d reduced so it would be more concentrated and flavorful. I kept the less traditional Triple Sec in place, because I like the hint of orange, but you can skip it if you are less of a sangria blasphemist. And for the fruit, we used a mix of apples, because like everyone else, we overdid it at the apple farms in October. The result was even better than I’d hoped, and apple-y in an adult way: subtle and not terribly sweet. As our kids ran up and down the hallways in an sugar-demonic haze, trick-or-treating through a friend’s building last weekend, we grownups got to sip from glasses of, uh, grown-up candy. (While saving the actual candy-thieving for after they fall asleep, as is our parental privilege, of course.)