

Hogwarts Express Pumpkin Pasties

(inspired by the *Harry Potter* series)

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The pumpkin pasty in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone...*

“He had never had any money for candy with the Dursleys, and now that he had pockets rattling with gold and silver he was ready to buy as many Mars Bars as he could carry — but the woman didn't have Mars Bars. What she did have were Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, Drooble's Best Blowing Gum, Chocolate Frogs, Pumpkin Pasties, Cauldron Cakes, Licorice Wands, and a number of other strange things Harry had never seen in his life. Not wanting to miss anything, he got some of everything and paid the woman eleven silver Sickles and seven bronze Knuts.

Ron stared as Harry brought it all back in to the compartment and tipped it onto an empty seat.

“Hungry, are you?”

“Starving,” said Harry, taking a large bite out of a pumpkin pasty.

Ron had taken out a lumpy package and unwrapped it. There were four sandwiches inside. He pulled one of them apart and said, “She always forgets I don't like corned beef..”

“Swap you for one of these,” said Harry, holding up a pasty. “Go on —” “You don't want this, it's all dry,” said Ron. “She hasn't got much time,” he added quickly, “you know, with five of us.”

“Go on, have a pasty,” said Harry, who had never had anything to share before or, indeed, anyone to share it with. It was a nice feeling, sitting there with Ron, eating their way through all Harry's pasties, cakes, and candies (the sandwiches lay forgotten).

“What are these?” Harry asked Ron, holding up a pack of Chocolate Frogs. “They're not *really* frogs, are they?” He was starting to feel that nothing would surprise him” (101-102)

In this scene, as Harry makes his first journey aboard the Hogwarts Express, he begins his initiation into a new world. At first, he perceives the food trolley as an opportunity for unprecedented indulgence. Indeed, for the first time in his life he has money (a lot of it!) and no

aunt or uncle peering over his shoulder, so he anticipates the (familiar) candy bars that he will buy in excess. Soon, however, he recognizes the trolley as a lesson in wizarding ways as much as a lesson in being rich. On some levels, the pumpkin pasties he consumes are the least educational of the trolley items. The strange flavors of the Bertie Bott's jelly beans and the collectible cards accompanying the Chocolate Frogs (Harry's first encounter with moving photographs) are far more "magical." Yet the pasties shared with Ron are a gesture of friendship. The miniature feast that they enjoy on the train—a kind of appetizer to the feast they consume in the Great Hall—reflects the sense of belonging that Hogwarts comes to represent for Harry. Interestingly, it is not Ron who invites Harry to have pasty, though he is already a member of the wizarding world. Rather, it is the reverse, indicating the social currency that Harry already has upon entering this world, despite his total unfamiliarity with its customs.

Throughout the series, Harry eats these foods when he rides the Hogwarts Express, which serves as a liminal zone between the Muggle world and the world of wizards. In this sense, pumpkin pasties, along with the other foods from the trolley, mark and facilitate his passage between these two very different worlds, and the entirely separate lives he leads within them. Eating the pasties helps Harry to ground himself and navigate the often-treacherous transitions between two identities.

Harry is not the only one receiving an education in this scene. The audience, too, is discovering an unknown world. For an American audience, the wizarding world is even more foreign than it is for Harry himself, being so imbued with British culture. Indeed, the pumpkin pasty would not be an especially surprising culinary innovation for a British audience, being a variation on the traditional Cornish Pasty. For us, however, it brings with it both a touch of whimsy and a charming British-ness. Indeed, the pumpkin pasty raises an important question: is the American obsession with *Harry Potter* a magical variation on anglophilia?