

Jimmy Potts and the Giant Cornish Pasty

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Little Jimmy Potts was on the first day of his first family holiday at the seaside. Every other holiday during his eight years in life had been spent at his grandparents' home in the middle of England where the sea was a long, long way away and so was the nearest ice-cream shop, which was a problem for Jimmy as he loved ice-cream, and when I say he loved ice-cream, what I mean is that he really, really, *really* loved ice-cream. In fact, he loved ice-cream so much he sometimes had it for breakfast, not on its own of course as that would be silly, but on his cereal. There was no better breakfast in the world in Jimmy's mind than putting a scoop of vanilla ice-cream on his cornflakes and then sending the bowl round the microwave so that the ice-cream melted right through the cornflakes, soaking them, turning them soggy, and then once all eaten there would be a pool of milk at the bottom of the bowl which could be drunk like a vanilla ice-cream milkshake, and often some of the milk would spill down his chin and onto his pyjamas and his mum would ask if he'd been eating ice-cream again for breakfast.

'No mum,' he'd say. 'It's just milk.'

'Are you sure, Jimmy? Because it looks like ice-cream.'

'It's not, mum, I promise; it's just milk. I don't even like ice-cream.'

Jimmy's mum never believed him, but let him get away with it because she knew just how much he loved ice-cream and had told him that where they were going to on holiday had the best ice-cream in the country.

'Cornwall?' said Jimmy before they went away. 'Where is it?'

'By the sea,' said Jimmy's mum. 'We're staying in a village.'

'Do they sell Cornettos there?'

'Of course, love. Cornettos are sold everywhere.'

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Cornettos were Jimmy's favourite afternoon ice-cream. For Jimmy, going into a shop and looking at the Cornettos wrapped in their shiny foil and lined up in racks in the freezer was like looking at presents under the Christmas tree on Christmas Day morning. It didn't matter to Jimmy if the weather was scorching hot or icy cold, he always took his time in deciding which Cornetto to pick because it could be a long time, perhaps even a week, before he was allowed another one, so he had to get it right. He normally ignored the vanilla flavour because he'd had it for breakfast, and he ignored the mint ones as he didn't like mint, leaving him with the terrible choice to make between classic chocolate and strawberry chocolate. With classic chocolate he had lots of chocolate, which was brilliant, but if he went for strawberry chocolate he'd have less chocolate, but make up for it with strawberry flavour, which was his favourite flavour after chocolate and so he'd get a bit of both.

'Hurry up son,' his dad would say. 'Make your pick.'

Eventually, Jimmy would make his pick. But there was a rule. It wasn't his rule, it was his parents' rule. The rule was that he could only have a Cornetto if he'd eaten his lunch, and his lunch couldn't be ice-cream. This worried Jimmy as he walked with his family from their holiday cottage into the fishing village in Cornwall. He hadn't eaten lunch because he'd felt car sick on the journey, but he wasn't in the car now and lunch had long passed, and so had his sickness and all he wanted was a Cornetto. He daren't ask for one, because he knew he'd be told he couldn't have one. What he needed was his big sister Maggie to ask for one and then he could ask for one too, but she annoyingly hadn't said a word yet about wanting one. All Maggie wanted to do was sit on the harbour wall and stare at the sea and the boats. There were plenty of boats to stare at and other things too; such as the fishermen cleaning their boats, or the fishermen bringing in their boats, or the holidaymakers wandering around wondering what to do, with some peering through the little tearoom's window, and others going in and out of one of the three pubs, each of which had names Jimmy thought a pirate

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would appreciate. There was the Hobgoblin at the far end of the village, the Shipwreck Inn in the middle part and the Drunken Dragon right behind where Jimmy was sitting on the harbour wall not looking at the boats, but at the shop in the distance.

‘I fancy an ice-cream,’ said Jimmy’s dad. ‘Do you want one, love?’

‘Yeah, why not?’ said Jimmy’s mum. ‘We’re on holiday, after all.’

‘What about you Maggie?’

Maggie shook her head.

‘Just me and you love, then,’ said Jimmy’s dad.

Jimmy pulled a face.

‘Sorry, son, you know the rules.’

‘I’ll eat lunch!’ said Jimmy pleadingly. ‘I will! I will!’

‘Too late for getting lunch now, son.’

Jimmy looked around the harbour, squinting, searching for somewhere. ‘What about that place?’ he said.

Jimmy’s dad looked at where Jimmy was pointing. ‘Oh yeah, good spot, son. We’ll find you something in the bakery.’

‘And then can I have a Cornetto?’

‘Once you eat what I get you, yes.’

‘Don’t get him a cake,’ said Jimmy’s mum. ‘He needs something savoury.’

‘Don’t you worry,’ said Jimmy’s dad. ‘I know just the thing.’

Jimmy went with his dad to the bakery, walking past the village shop.

Not long to go now, Jimmy thought. Not long till I get my Cornetto.

There was a queue in the bakery. It stretched to the doorway, irritating Jimmy as all he wanted to do was to go in the shop. Eventually, they got to the front of the queue. Jimmy stared at the cabinet, trying to decide which sandwich he could eat the fastest. There was an

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egg sandwich, but it had cress in it and cress tasted like grass, and there was also a ham sandwich, but it had tomato in it and tomato tasted yucky unless it was sauce. The chicken looked okay to Jimmy, only it was on brown bread with bits and he didn't like bits in his bread. There was cheese though. Just cheese on its own and made with white bread.

'Yes, sir?' said the woman behind the counter.

'A Cornish pasty, please,' said Jimmy's dad.

A Cornish what? Jack thought.

'Hot or cold?' said the woman.

'Hot, please,' said Jimmy's dad.

The woman opened an oven and used tongs to remove a Cornish pasty. She slid it into a paper bag and passed it over the counter.

'There you go, son,' said Jimmy's dad, passing down the bag.

Jimmy held the bag by the corner and left the shop with his head down, sulking as best he could.

'Cheer up, son,' said his dad. 'You're on holiday!'

Jimmy sat down on a bench outside the bakery and opened the bag. He looked at the size of the pasty and his heart sank. The pasty's shape was like a rugby ball cut in half and it was huge; so huge that Jimmy knew he wouldn't be able to finish it and if didn't finish it he wouldn't get his ice-cream.

'How do I eat it?' he asked his dad.

'Start at the end and work your way through it.'

The pasty's exterior was thick pastry. Some of it was smooth, but the edge resembled a rough piece of rope and appeared to Jimmy to be impossible to bite through it was so thick.

'I don't like it,' he said.

'You haven't even tried it,' said his dad.

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‘Can’t I have it later?’

‘Not if you want an ice-cream.’

Jimmy looked to his side. Boys and girls were stepping away from the shop and they were each carrying a Cornetto. Soon, Jimmy feared, there would be none left to buy. He pulled the paper bag down a little lower and raised the pasty to his mouth.

‘What’s in it?’ he asked.

‘Delicious things,’ his dad said. ‘Trust me.’

Jimmy was now very worried. His dad thought sprouts were delicious, but anyone who’s eaten one knows they are disgusting.

Please don’t have sprouts in, Jimmy thought as he raised the pasty a little higher.

Anything but sprouts!

He took a tiny bite of the pastry and began to chew nervously.

Mmm, he thought. I like this pastry. It tastes nice.

Still, it was only the pastry; only the edge. Jimmy had yet to take on the heart of the of the Cornish pasty. He swallowed and took another little bite, and then another, nibbling his way down the side of the pasty until there was no side left.

‘The best bit is still to come,’ said his dad. ‘Just you wait.’

Jimmy looked at the inside of the pasty, trying to work out what he was looking at. There was some brown meat, which he guessed was beef, and around the beef were small chunks of what appeared to be potato. It’s just like a funny shaped meat and potato pie, Jimmy thought. I can eat this.

He took a good-sized bite and began to chew. The beef didn’t taste like normal beef, it tasted better, much better, and so did the potatoes, they were the tastiest potatoes Jimmy had ever tasted. He swallowed and immediately took another bite, this time a big, big bite, cramming as much as the pasty into his mouth. As he chewed, he realised there were other

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ingredients than just beef and potato. He looked at the opened-up pasty. There were onions, which he loved, particularly on a hot dog on bonfire night, and something else; chunks of another vegetable, the same size as the potato chunks, only the colour was pale yellow.

‘That’s swede,’ said his dad.

Jimmy’s mouth was full so he couldn’t talk. He’d never heard of swede, but he’d heard of Sweden and wondered if that was where the vegetable was grown. He continued to chew and swallow, and chew and swallow, until soon all the pasty was in his tummy and all he was holding was the paper bag.

‘You liked it then?’ asked his dad.

Jimmy nodded.

‘Good lad. You can have your ice-cream now.’

But Jimmy wasn’t thinking about ice-cream. He was thinking about another Cornish pasty. ‘Can I get a second one, dad?’ he asked.

‘Aren’t you full, son?’

Jimmy shook his head. ‘I’ve still got room.’

‘How about we share one, eh?’

Jimmy waited on the bench as his dad bought a second pasty. He got another hot one, and he also bought a little sachet of tomato sauce which he bit open with his teeth and squeezed the contents on to the two halves of the pasty.

Wow! Jimmy thought as he turned the pasty and the sauce around his mouth. This is yummy!

He finished his half of the pasty in no time and got his Cornetto. But even as he reached his favourite part, which was the solid chocolate at the bottom of the cone, all he was thinking about was when he could have another Cornish pasty. He didn’t have to wait long; just until the following day, actually, but it felt far too long to wait for Jimmy. He had a pasty

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the day after, and the day after that, and the one after that, always looking out for a bakery in every town or village they stopped at during their holiday. Even on the morning they were leaving to go home he bought one, running down into the village to be first in the queue when the bakery opened.

‘Remember what it tastes like, love,’ said his mum. ‘Cornish pasties always taste different outside of Cornwall.’

Jimmy didn’t believe his mum, but she turned out to be right. No one where he lived sold Cornish pasties that were as delicious as the ones he’d had in Cornwall. They were good, and some were very good, but they still weren’t like the ones sold in the fishing village.

‘Sorry, love,’ said his mum. ‘You’ll just have to wait till the next time we’re in Cornwall.’

‘When will that be?’ asked Jimmy, hoping the answer would be ‘soon’.

‘Not for a while, love. We’re going to France next year, remember?’

‘Do they sell Cornish pasties there?’ said Jimmy.

‘No love, sorry.’

‘So when are we going to Cornwall again?’

‘Don’t know, love. Maybe in a couple of years.’

Jimmy went to his room and closed the door, suddenly overwhelmed by sadness. He couldn’t even wait another day for a real Cornish pasty. Two years seemed forever. He lay back on his bed and closed his eyes, daydreaming about the bakery in the fishing village, picturing all the pasties in the oven, waiting to be served, and then just beyond the counter the place where the baker made the pasties and brought them out to be cooked.

That’s the job I want, Jack thought. I want to be a baker when I’m older and then I can eat a Cornish pasty for lunch and dinner, and breakfast too if I want.

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Wait a moment, Jack thought. Why should I wait until I'm older? I can bake Cornish pasties at home. I can bake them, and bake them, and bake them until I get them as good as they are in Cornwall!

He sprung up and rushed downstairs to the bookshelves, scanning his eyes along the spines of books, looking for ones about cooking.

Birthday cakes that will make your child cry with joy...

100 salads to fill you up and make you thin...

Recipes to impress your new neighbour...

Eat more, lose weight...

None of those will be of help, Jack thought. Suddenly, he remembered a book that was old and falling apart, and had to be kept on top of the bookshelf because it was so big. He dragged a dining room chair and put it in front of the bookshelf. He went up on his tiptoes on the chair, stretched his arm and brought down the book: *The Baking Bible – every recipe you need.*

The book was heavy and had dust on the cover, but it remained all in one piece.

'Are you alright, love?' asked his mum.

Jimmy swallowed. He could feel his cheeks burn.

'What you doing with that book?'

'Err... it's just for school,' said Jimmy. 'We have to...err... look at recipes.'

'Recipes?'

'Yeah. Recipes.'

'What kind of recipe?'

'Err... dunno. Just recipes.'

'Very well, just make sure you don't break my book. It's very fragile.'

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Jimmy went to his room, using both hands to carry the book. He put it on his desk and turned the pages until he found the index page. He went straight to the recipes beginning with the letter C.

Carrott cake...

Cheesecake...

Chocolate cake...

Chocolate fudge cake...

All the cake names were making Jimmy feel hungry. He kept going through the letter C, waiting... waiting... waiting...

Yes! He thought. It's in here!

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Jimmy turned to the page for the recipe and began to read, but as he reached halfway he got annoyed and gave up. Making a Cornish pasty seemed to be more difficult than anything at school, and everything at school was difficult except for play time.

Jimmy closed the book and huffed loudly.

It was a stupid idea, he thought. As if I could make a Cornish pasty. And I can't ask mum because she's so busy which leaves only... Maggie. Yes! Maggie can make it! Maggie loves baking. I'll ask her!

Maggie said she'd do it, but only if Jimmy did all the washing up and paid her one pound for every pasty she made.

'One pound?' said Jimmy.

'Yeah, one pound.'

'Can't it be less?'

'No, it can only be more. Do you want the pasty or not?'

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Jimmy remembered the money he had in his piggy bank. 'Yeah, I do. Can I have five please?'

'You can't eat five pasties, Jimmy.'

'I can try.'

Maggie sighed. 'Okay, I'll make your five pasties for you. But you'd better eat them.'

Maggie made the pasties when she came home from school. They were amazing, almost as good as the ones in the fishing village. Jimmy managed to eat two of them, leaving one for the following day, and two spare.

'What's that?' his best friend Danny asked.

'It's a Cornish pasty,' said Jimmy.

'Can I try some?'

Jimmy wanted to say no. He realised it would be mean and so gave Danny one of his spares.

'Wow!' said Danny, finishing his pasty. 'They're delicious!'

'I know,' said Jimmy. 'I love them.'

'Can I have another?'

'But I've only got one left.'

'I'll buy it.'

'Err... I dunno.'

'One pound fifty. Oh go on, Jimmy. I am your best friend.'

Jimmy sold Danny his last pasty. After Danny had gone home, Jimmy thought about the money he'd taken from him and how he'd made a fifty pence profit.

That's a lot of money, he thought. I could sell more pasties to my friends. I could sell ten even... that would make me a profit of... five pounds!

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The next day, Jimmy persuaded Maggie to make him ten Cornish pasties. She agreed, but said Jimmy had to do her house chores as well as pay her one pound for each pasty, and promise he wouldn't ask her to bake again. Jimmy made his promise and he didn't mind doing the chores of picking up rotten fruit from the garden and walking the dog if it meant he made five pounds.

Once the pasties were cooked he left them on the baking tray and covered them with a tea-towel.

'Where are you going with those?' Maggie asked as Jimmy went to leave the house.

'Just to Danny's.'

'I don't believe you.'

'I am, I swear.'

'Whatever, brother. Just don't get me into trouble.'

Jimmy wasn't lying completely, as he did go to Danny's house, selling him two pasties for three pounds.

'Where are you going now?' said Danny.

'To Billy's house,' said Jimmy.

'But Billy's brothers will want to eat them.'

'Yeah, I know. That's why I'm going there.'

Billy Tompkins had six brothers and they were all ginormous.

'What's that?' Billy said to Jimmy.

'It's a Cornish pasty. I'm selling them.'

'What's in it?'

'Meat and stuff.'

'I like meat,' said Billy. 'How much for one?'

'Two pounds.'

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Billy paid his money and ate his pasty while his six brothers watched. ‘Yum,’ he said, smiling. ‘That’s the best thing I’ve ever eaten.’

‘You what?’ said one of his brothers. ‘Better than a burger?’

‘Yeah, much better than a burger.’

‘Nah, it can’t be,’ said the brother. ‘I don’t believe you.’

‘Try one if you want,’ said Jimmy. ‘They don’t cost much.’

The brother paid Jimmy two pounds and ate his pasty. ‘He’s right,’ he said. ‘That is better than a burger!’

All at once, the other brothers said, ‘I want one!’ and rushed around the house, trying to find the money to buy a pasty.

One by one, they came to Jimmy with their two pounds, leaving him with an empty tray and a pocket full of change.

‘I want another,’ said one of them.

‘And me!’ said another.

Jimmy didn’t know what to say, but then he had an idea. ‘I’ll come back tomorrow,’ he said. ‘And I’ll bring even more!’

Jimmy’s idea was simple: he’d make the pasties himself. It all looked simple enough. He had the recipe and he’d watched Maggie make some, so he knew what to do. All he needed was his parents not to find out. The following day he rushed home from school and began to make his pasties. First, he put flour, baking powder, butter, salt and egg yolks into his mum’s food processor and turned it on, making lots of crumbs to which he added some water, making it soft like playdough. He wrapped the dough in clingfilm and placed it in the fridge just like his sister had done, and got to work on the mixture for inside the pasties. Into a giant bowl went the finely chopped beef he’d bought from the local butcher, sprinkling it salt and pepper and flour, and then went the potatoes and onion and swede, and with it all,

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Jimmy prodded and turned, and prodded and turned, until it looked like a brownish football ready to be cooked. But first, there was the pastry to finish. Jimmy brought it out of the fridge and rolled it until his arms ached, and it was smooth and flat, and needed to be cut. He remembered how his sister had used a dinner plate for measurement and so he did the same, cutting out ten dinner-plate sized portions into which he placed the mixture, leaving a gap round the edge of each, and around the edge he spread butter and a beaten egg. And then came the folding part. Jimmy lifted the pastry over the meat and vegetables, crimped the edges, brushed it all with more beaten egg, poked the top to let steam escape and finally, after all the prodding and rolling, and cutting, and brushing, the ten pasties were ready to go into the hot oven. In they went, sliding on to the middle rack where they would remain for fifty minutes. Jimmy crouched down, switching his attention between the clock and the oven's glass door, worried one of his parents might come home early and ask what he was doing, and worried even more that his pasties wouldn't taste as good as his sister's and that Billy's big brothers would want their money back after eating them.

Slowly, so very slowly, the pasties became golden and crispy and the time arrived to bring them out of the oven. The smell to Jimmy was magnificent. It was the smell of a Cornish pasty; of cooked meat and vegetables, and butter-brushed pastry. There wasn't time for them to cool, Jimmy thought. People want their pasties!

Danny wasn't home so he missed out, but his sister was and liked the look of the pasties so bought one, as did Danny's mum, leaving eight for Billy and his six brothers. The eldest bought two and the others all paid up, leaving Jimmy with twenty pounds in coins in his pocket.

This is easy money, he thought to himself as he walked home with his empty baking tray. I should make more!

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And so he did. The next day he made twelve and the day after that another twelve, but he couldn't make any more as the oven wasn't big enough and every time his mum came home she complained the house smelled of Cornish pasty. And so Jimmy kept baking pasties at a dozen a time, and soon his piggy bank was filled with coins.

Probably should give up, Jimmy thought. I don't want to get greedy.

And then he saw a poster in the local shop and he changed his mind. The poster declared:

The Great Baking Contest

Be in to win £250

All baking welcome!