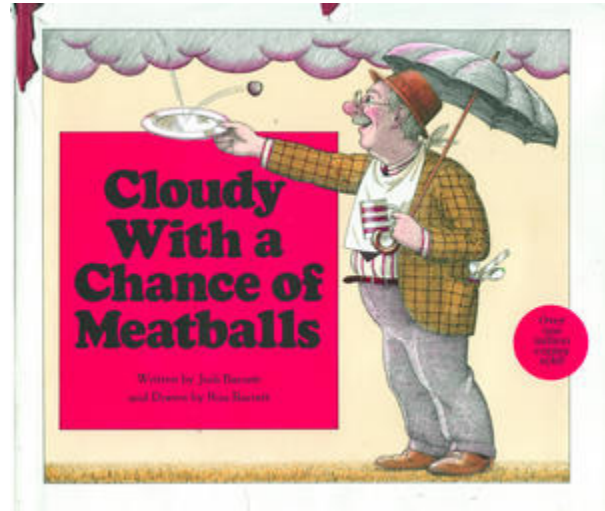


Portland Press Herald Maine Sunday Telegram

'Meatballs' in the forecast

Local kids consider the tasty meteorological possibilities as the new movie 'Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs' arrives in theaters.

By MEREDITH GOAD, Staff Writer September 17, 2009



PORTLAND — Hannah Avant barely hesitated when asked what kind of food she would like to see fall from the sky.

"Strawberries. And whipped cream. With chocolate sauce," said the seventh-grader at the Friends School of Portland.

"I don't want to get stains on my clothes," replied the more practical Harry Linfield, also in seventh grade. "I think I'd like something to fall from the sky that wouldn't kill me when it hit me. So I'm going to go with something soft. Like no, Jell-O would suffocate me."

"Jell-O falling from the sky would be cool," countered Annie Gott, a sixth-grader. "It would be squishy."

No, this isn't some weird new curriculum infiltrating the schools. These students are talking about "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs," a popular children's book by Judi Barrett that has been made into an animated film "in mouth-watering 3-D."

The movie, which opens Friday, is voiced by actors such as James Caan, Andy Samberg, Benjamin Bratt, Neil Patrick Harris and Mr. T.

"I really want to see it," said Margaret Dow, a second-grader at Longfellow Elementary School. "I want to see it so badly."

The story focuses on a little town called Chewandswallow, which to an adult brain sounds like one of those English coastal towns from 19th-century literature. But it's chew-and-swallow. Get it?

In Chewandswallow, no one has to go grocery shopping because breakfast, lunch and dinner falls from the sky. Soup comes down like rain. The wind blows in storms of hamburgers and giant pancakes. There are tomato tornadoes, and baseball games are called on account of pie.

The Portland Press Herald asked students from the Friends School and Longfellow Elementary what they thought about this idea, and what foods they would – and wouldn't – like to see fall from the sky.

In the book, a giant pancake falls on the Chewandswallow school, followed by a downpour of maple syrup. Doug Wagner, a third-grader at the Friends School, said standing in syrup would make him happy because he could just take a giant spoon and scoop it up directly into his mouth.

One student said he would fill swimming pools with juice; another said he would just go outside when it was raining and open his mouth.

"I would really like to see breakfast and lunch and dinner fall out of the sky without me having to wait for my mom to make the food," said Morgan Linfield, a third-grader at the Friends School. "It really takes a long time."

"I would want to have chips," said Annika More, a second-grader at Longfellow.

"Uh, pizza," said Lily Carrigan, also in second grade at Longfellow.

"I'm getting hungry," said her classmate, Andrew Fredenberg, who added he would "take a hamburger with relish."

Macaroni and cheese was a popular choice. So was anything chocolate.

"Chocolate's cool. Chocolate's good," said Annie Gott.

"Big s'mores," chimed in Hannah Avant.

Ever the practical one, Harry Linfield considered the safety aspects of raining edibles. "Do you really want a burning marshmallow coming down to incinerate you?" he pondered.

The girls replied that the marshmallow wouldn't be on fire, it "would be just, like, golden."

The kids seemed to realize that food from the sky, while it seems fun, could also have its downside. For one thing, unless it was caught in a plate, bowl or cup, it would land on the ground and get dirty.

"And people don't pick up their dog's poo-poo," Morgan Linfield added, helpfully. "I wouldn't really want to eat that."

There's not a lot of love for spinach in Portland schools. When Margaret Dow listed artichokes, spinach and broccoli as edibles she'd least like to fall from the sky, it touched a nerve.

"I hate spinach. Hate it," Annika More said.

"I hate, hate, hate spinach," echoed Travis Hunt, one of their classmates.

When Doug Wagner suggested falling ice cream cones might be a good thing, Hannah Rogers, a Friends School second-grader, vehemently disagreed. "No, that would be torture," she said, because "they're really pointy."

"Well, the sugar cones are," Doug pointed out. "But the cones could break if you missed by accident. Or they could also fall on your head, which would hurt if it was a sugar cone, but it would also break the tip, and the ice cream would start dribbling out on your head."

Hannah Rogers also worried about falling cheese, because "the squirrels can eat it, and it's really bad for them, maybe."

Giant potato chips were deemed dangerous, as was a shower of Doritos because of the chips' sharp corners.

Macaroni and cheese, said Hunt, would have to fall in a cube or be caught on a plate, or else it would be too messy. Carrigan thought spaghetti and meatballs would be messy as well.

Wagner wondered if lightning would make it rain fried food.

Would Maine's winter storms blow in more falling seafood than in, say, Iowa, where showers of steaks might be more the norm? The students liked the idea of lobster raining down from the sky – as long as it was lobster meat, already cooked and picked, so it wouldn't give small children nightmares.

They didn't want any other dead animals or anything that has scales falling on them, either.

The lone exception was Hunt, who couldn't think of anything he wouldn't want falling from the sky.

"I'm a hungry boy," he said.

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