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We Are What We Read . . . and Eat

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Brittany Shahmehri is a very creative mom, and she knows the way to a boy's heart — through his stomach. Shahmehri and her husband want their two boys to love books and reading, and they have come up with a great way to make books come alive for children.

From *The Christian Science Monitor*:

My husband is reading "The Secret Garden" aloud to our boys. They are at the part where Mary Lennox has told Colin that she's found the garden his mother loved. It's an exciting moment. But the passage I'm waiting for is a few chapters on, after Colin has tasted his first breaths of fresh moorland air and Mary has grown strong running in the garden. It's just a detail, but my kids will notice it: a luscious description of roasted potatoes and eggs.

We have a tradition of trying foods from the books we read aloud. It started when we read Elizabeth Enright's "The Saturdays," and one of the boys asked, "What are petit fours?"

An answer, my husband and I felt, wouldn't be as good as a sample. So one Saturday we all sat down to tea and little cakes, iced in pink, green, and yellow. It was exciting for the boys to try a dessert they had learned about in a book.

Later, when we read C.S. Lewis's "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," we had Turkish delight. "I don't think I would betray my brothers and sisters for this!" said one child.

Well there is a good lesson — but one wonders what dessert might tempt the boy to betray kith and kin.

Here she gets to the point:

The world that a good book creates is whole and real, but it lies flat on the page until a reader animates it. Stories, when read, are visceral: We believe in the characters. We can see their lives, hear the things they hear. We can almost taste the food they eat. Almost. Because while stories are visceral, they aren't tangible. Petit fours, however, are tangible.

These parents are clearly on to something. I read the article and wondered, "Why didn't I think of that?" Many children never read because their parents never read, and the satisfactions of the book are foreign to the home. Imagine the difference in this home, where two boys can't wait for the next book and the next chapter — and the next new snack.

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