

**THE GREAT PEACH
EXPERIMENT**

**WHEN LIFE GIVES
YOU LEMONS,
MAKE
PEACH PIE**



ERIN SODERBERG DOWNING

.....

**WHEN LIFE GIVES
YOU LEMONS,
MAKE PEACH PIE**

.....



**THE GREAT PEACH
EXPERIMENT**

**WHEN LIFE GIVES
YOU LEMONS,
MAKE
PEACH PIE**

ERIN SODERBERG DOWNING

PIXEL+INK

*For my incredible kids,
who are always up for adventure*

PIXEL+INK

Text copyright © 2021 by Erin Soderberg Downing
All rights reserved. Pixel+Ink is a division of TGM Development Corp.

Printed and bound in February 2021 at Maple Press, York, PA, U.S.A.

Book design and interior illustrations by Michelle Cunningham
Freddy's artwork by Henry Downing

www.pixelandinkbooks.com

First Edition

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020940463

Hardcover ISBN 978-1-64595-034-9

eBook ISBN 978-1-64595-060-8

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2



Erin Soderberg Downing is a fiscal year 2020 recipient of an Artist Initiative grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature; and by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

17



CHICAGO CHARACTERS

Freddy had always known he didn't have the same type of smarts as the other members of his family. Lucy, Herb, and Dad had all mastered math facts, none of them ever got distracted during tests or projects, and everyone except Freddy had done brainy stuff that won prizes. Freddy never won prizes and, no matter how much he practiced, he was certain he would never remember how to multiply fractions.

Perhaps this was because Freddy's head was filled to bursting with random facts, strange world records, art project ideas, and a few rather unimpressive card tricks. None of the things that occupied his brain ever earned him a perfect score on standardized tests, but he continually held out hope that someday his type of smarts and knowledge would prove useful for *something*.

Though he had read about a lot of amazing things over the past few years (fun facts about pee, an island that was home to a colony of swimming pigs, hundreds of scary-but-true survival stories), Freddy rarely experienced anything truly exciting in real life. His classmates were all very nice, but also fairly ordinary; his hometown was safe and pretty, nestled on the shore of majestic Lake Superior, but it was also pretty boring. If he was lucky, he crossed paths with one or two particularly interesting people on any given day—while he was at the library, selecting apples at the grocery store, or waiting to be picked up after his swimming lessons at the Y.

Which was why it was so exciting that, on the Peach family's first day of business in downtown Chicago, Freddy met more interesting people than he would usually encounter in a whole *year* at home. During the course of the day, he gave all their customers nicknames and jotted them down in his sketchbook. He knew this would help him remember them all, so he could draw pictures of some of them later.

“Could I please try a sample of your apple pie?” A hulking, muscled guy wearing a SMILE tank top flashed Freddy a friendly smile just a few minutes after the Peach Pie Truck had opened. The man's hair was shaved

around the edges, but the top was long and pushed back with gel or sweat or *something*.

“Sorry,” Freddy told the guy. “We don’t offer samples.”

“I just . . .,” the man began. “Never mind. It’s not your problem.” Then the big guy began to cry. Loud, blubbering sobs that echoed off the buildings around them.

Freddy and Lucy exchanged a nervous look. Herb gaped at the man, while Dad pretended to be busy washing something in the sink. Meanwhile, the guy pulled napkin after napkin out of their dispenser, loudly snorting and wiping his nose.

Dad, clearly uncomfortable, stepped forward and looked beseechingly at Freddy. He mouthed, “What should we do?”

Unfazed, Freddy quickly said, “Which pie was it you were hoping to taste, sir?”

The guy blinked. He blubbered, “I—I’d love a quick sample of the apple.” He gobbled it down, and then belched and said, “That’s yummy. Now the peach?”

Freddy sliced a slim sliver off the peach pie and passed it to the man.

“Mmm-mmm,” the man said. “I’d just love to compare that to the French silk.” He ate that, and then said, “Seems a shame not to test the pecan and turtle, too. That’s the

only way I can make an informed decision. And if I don't try them all, one of the pies will feel left out."

Lucy narrowed her eyes at the guy. Freddy squeezed his sister's shoulder to try to calm her. In the grand scheme of things, a few free slivers of pie really weren't a big deal.

"All scrumptious," the man—whom Freddy had now secretly nicknamed Sample Stan—announced, after swallowing down his sliver of turtle pie. "Sadly, I couldn't eat another bite."

Then Sample Stan turned and strolled away. Freddy knew they'd been had. But when Dad congratulated him on how well he'd handled the situation, saying he'd demonstrated grace, kindness, compassion, and smart thinking, he decided he really didn't care. He'd much rather make his dad proud than sell a sneaky dude a slice of five-dollar pie. It felt good to do something well, and have Dad take notice.

After Sample Stan stopped by, they met:

- **Quick and Crabby**
- **Big Guy Flirts with Dad**
- **Pays in Coins (five bucks' worth of nickels and dimes!)**
- **Toddlers Who Touch Stuff**

- **Overly Curious Customer**
- **Job Seeker** (“Are you guys hiring? Can I get an application?”)
- **Discount Lady** (“I’ll give you three dollars for a slice. Five seems high.”)
- **Bathroom Hunter**
- **Tattoos + an Iguana** (an ACTUAL, LIVE IGUANA on the dude’s arm!)
- **Nearly Naked**
- **Sings His Order** (“I will take peeeeeeach piiiiiiiie!”)
- **Dine & Dash**
- **Burpie McBurperson**
- **Hold the Crust**
- **Side of Fries**
- **Barter Boy**
- **Cast of Hamilton** (two REAL actors from the Chicago cast ensemble!!)

Late in the afternoon, a soft-spoken lady with a real, live *parrot* on her shoulder strolled up to the truck. “Do you have cake?” she asked Freddy, carefully studying the five-item menu. She looked nervous, her eyes flicking quickly between Freddy, the menu, her parrot, and something invisible on the sidewalk over her left shoulder.

“Nope,” Freddy replied. “Just the five pies, clearly listed there on the board. Is that a parrot?”

“Chocolate cake?” the woman asked, ignoring his question.

“We have no cake at all.” He squinted. “Does it just sit there? Does it ever try to fly away?”

“Red velvet?” Cake Lady asked, stroking one of the parrot’s spindly claws.

Freddy shook his head, keeping careful watch on the bird. “We’re the Peach *Pie* Truck, ma’am. No red velvet.”

“You know what’s yummy? Vanilla cake with raspberry filling and buttercream frosting.”

“Good to know.” Freddy smiled at her patiently. “Can I tempt you with a slice of pie today? The French silk is very popular. It’s cake-*like*, I guess.”

Cake Lady pulled her eyebrows together. “That will be fine.” She slid a fiver across the counter and collected her pie. “And I’ll come by tomorrow to see if cake is back in stock.”

Surrounded by all these odd and fascinating folks roaming the streets of Chicago, Freddy began to wonder who would win the prize for Strangest Food Truck Customer Ever. The only thing he knew for sure was, Chicago had presented plenty of challenges that gave

the Peaches a perfect chance to practice their customer service skills for the Ohio Food Truck Festival.



During the course of their trip, Freddy had begun to realize he had a knack for dealing with people. And he felt even *more* confident about his people skills after handling all of Chicago's kooky customers. If they managed to come out on top at the Ohio Food Truck Festival, Freddy knew it would be in big part because of contributions *he'd* made to this family experiment. Sure, they were a team—and everyone in the family played an important role. But for once in his life, Freddy felt a little like the leader. He, Freddy Peach, was *good* at this. And he couldn't wait to help guide his family to victory.

CHICAGO MONEY:

(BY HERB)

- * Cost of Pie Supplies: \$532
(Dad didn't ruin any pies!)
 - * Sales: \$1,250 *
 - * Returns: \$5
(Cake Lady didn't like her pie)
 - * Total Profit: \$713!!!! **
- * Thanks to Freddy, who convinced the campground manager to let us sell some of our leftover pie to other campers!**
- **Not \$10,000 yet, but it's a step in the right direction . . . and we still have time!**