

The One with the Dumplings

Alice I have enjoyed your book presentations so much. We've only got one left. Maddy?

Maddy So, I'm going to be talking about this fantastic book, it's called Dragon Keeper and it's about this girl who's a slave girl in ancient China during the Han Dynasty. And she has to go on this fantastic journey with this dragon. I just absolutely love the different foods and the different culture that's in this book. And the magic and everything. But it's so surprising what she has to eat, which is like gruel and things that you would throw out, versus what the royals eat, where they eat like Shanghai dumplings, and absolutely delicious salads, and all these amazing things. So I think that's what really was amazing about the food in this book.

Alice It's funny that you should mention that salads are a bit of a luxury.

Maddy Because so many things had to travel so far to get to where she was, on such a rocky, mountainy place, I think that fresh things were really rare and a luxury.

Alice Yeah, right. We're very lucky here, aren't we?

Jonathan Yeah, indeed we are.

Alice Hey, speaking of lucky, tell us about these dumplings.

Maddy So these are Shanghai dumplings or xiaolongbao. And they're dumplings with meat or vegetables, and soup inside.

Alice Mmm. How do they get the soup in the dumpling?

Maddy You can inject the soup, or they sometimes have a cube of this gelatin-like soup and when they cook it, soup melts.

Alice That sounds delicious. Who's had xiaolongbao before? Nice. Who's going to try it now?

That's good. Really good. And did you have a favourite food from these presentations, Maddy?

Maddy I loved the beetroot from Lily's story, and I loved the chocolate from Lucy's story. Wait, and I love ice cream. So if we mix them together, could we make an ice cream?

Alice Heck yes, you could.

Maddy It would be absolutely delicious.

Jonathan Definitely. I would love it.

- Alice** Sounds like another project to me. Why do you think so many books of your age group are set around characters that have to go beyond their limitations?
- Maddy** I think because we as kids know that we can do some things, but are not brave enough to venture and do bigger things. So these books show that we can do bigger or better things.
- Alice** Yeah, you can go beyond your limitations. What do you think, Jonathan?
- Jonathan** It shows us that we can believe and that we can do anything that we put our mind to.
- Alice** I believe that more than anything. Billy?
- Billy** Carpe diem?
- Alice** Carpe diem. Look at you speaking Latin. What does that mean?
- Billy** Seize the day.
- Alice** Seize the day. That sounds like something Tuberman might say.
- Jonathan** Yeah. Definitely.
- Aunty Dale** So ...
- Lucy** Does it smell good?
- Aunty Dale** Take a little bit of this and tell me what it smells like. It's spearminty, almost fruity, isn't it?
- Lucy** Yeah.
- Aunty Dale** It's called river mint.
- Maddy** Ooh.
- Aunty Dale** Mentha australis.
- Lucy** No wonder it smelled like mint.
- Aunty Dale** So it's a true, Australian mint. It grows along the rivers. Like all mints, it likes a lot of water.
- Lucy** Ooh, this smells nice too.
- Aunty Dale** This is warrigal greens, or Botany Bay greens, or native spinach. And you use it instead of spinach. So, normally if you'd eat a big leaf like this, you're going to blanche it. Pour boiling water over it first. And then refresh it in ice water. Or you can continue to cook it. And then have it instead of spinach.

- Alice** Kylie Kwong, one of Australia's best chefs, makes a really delicious warrigal greens dumpling.
- Lucy** I love Dumplings.
- Alice** Secret ingredient. Chives.
- Aunty Dale** And now the next secret ingredient for our special dish.
- Lucy** This smells very lemon-like.
- Aunty Dale** Smells like lemongrass on steroids? Yup. Because lemongrass has, I think about, 30% free citral and lemon myrtle has about 90%.
- Maddy** Ahh.
- Alice** As with all herbs it's best when you bruise it a little bit, so you release those natural oils. So give it a bit of a squish, Billy.
- Billy** Whoa. That's heaps stronger.
- Aunty Dale** Lemon myrtle cheesecake is delicious.
- Maddy** Can you have it in chocolate?
- Aunty Dale** Oh, yes, you can have it in chocolate. It's delicious in chocolate.
- Billy** Sounds good.
- Aunty Dale** So in that myrtaceae family we have the myrtles, the eucalyptus, and the tea trees. And they all have their beautiful aromatic leaves. Some are good to eat and some are good for medicine.