Pizza Pizza

By Tiyasa C.

Grade 5
I spit out the tasteless food served in the airplane. It is nothing like the *luchi* and *mangsho* that my grandmother prepares at home in India. I’ve left all that and now traveling to America in this huge airplane. I brush away the spit and a single teardrop as I fall asleep.

As we near the airport where we are going to land, I peek out the window and see lots of cotton everywhere...?!

When I ask my mother about the cotton, she laughs and says, “Srija, that is not cotton; it’s snow.”

“What’s snow?” I inquire.

“It’s a cold, fluffy thing made of condensed water.”

I don’t know what *condensed* means, because I am only seven. But snow seems like a fun thing.

When I finally enter our new home, I am glad because I know my mom will make tasty Indian food for me. Then I won’t have to eat that cold bread with sauce and cheese on it again.

The next day......

My mom drops me off to my new school. I am scared. This is my very first time being alone in a different place. As I scan the whole classroom, it occurs to me that getting a friend will be the best thing to do. But no one really notices me.

As the teacher announces *RECESS TIME*, we walk outside and are greeted with cotton - I mean snow – everywhere.

*Splat!!* A ball of snow hits my back. I turn to see a girl my age giggling at me.

“What’s your name?” I ask.

“I’m Alizabeth, but you can call me Aliza. What’s yours?”

“It’s Srija”, I answer.

We quickly become friends, sharing everything about ourselves in a manner of chatting and laughing. I get to learn about Alizabeth, her family, and this new country, while she listens to my talk of my family in India.
Before I know it, the lunch bell rings and our whole class lines up in the lunch line at the cafeteria. I pack my lunch, so I go and sit down and wait for Aliza. When we settle down to eat, we both stare at each other’s food. I can tell that Aliza has never seen Indian food before. But I can recognize the bread at the airplane, now on Aliza’s tray. Except this time, it is hot and more real-looking.

“Wanna try? It’s called pizza”, Aliza says excitedly.

The taste of the dry, cold bread comes back to me. I remember the lurch of the plane with the bread in my mouth. So I cover my mouth, stifle a gagging sound and say, “No thanks” before resuming my lunch.

I forget this incident soon. But about a week or two later, it is pizza day again. By this time, I have gotten used to receiving lunch sharing offers from Aliza. But when I see the pizza steaming on Aliza’s plate, I have to gulp down some water to keep from throwing up.

Aliza eagerly remarks, “I know you’ll love this food, you enjoyed a lot of the other ones!”

I suppose, she too has forgotten the previous pizza day, and thus offers me a slice. When I see the bright, anticipating look on Aliza’s face, I can tell she really wants me to try out this American food.

Hastily, I reply, “How about you try my food first?”

Today, I have brought paneer makhani and luchi.

“How do I eat it?” Aliza looks at me quizzically and inquires.

I explain that you take the luchi like a tortilla, put some paneer inside it, and then eat it. Aliza follows the instructions and take a bite.

“It’s just as fun wrapping it as eating it!” she exclaims. “And, the paneer tastes like cheese!”

I’m surprised. To me, American foods are completely different and have nothing in common with Indian tastes. But this seems like a decent similarity.

So I muster up all the courage in me, take a deep breath, close my eyes and take a bite.
Chew. Chew. Yum!

The taste of spicy tomato sauce blends well with the soft bread.

Chew. Chew. It’s pretty close to paneer! And the cheese melts in my mouth.
Chew. Chew. Nothing like the airplane food. Judging by the big smile on my face, Aliza can clearly tell this is my new favorite.

“So how is it, Srija?” she asks.

I laugh heartily and reply, “Better than I could have imagined!”

As I munch the tasty pizza (Aliza and I trade our lunches), I grin with pleasure to think that only a few days earlier, I had not had a friend and felt superiorly alone. And now, I am enjoying a yummy food with my best friend. Pizza makes you happy. If that is true, then it really works on me! 😊

Glossary

Luchi: A small round flatbread made with refined flour and deep fried.

Mangsho: A spicy delicious curry made with chicken/mutton/lamb

Paneer: Cube of cheese made in Indian style

Paneer Makhani: A mild creamy gravy made with Paneer