

# “Peter Rabbit”

By Helen Lutz

Have you ever had to attend a party and find yourself just dreading the event, however, once in attendance you discover a pleasant surprise, a good time? Being a picky eater – my parents could always count on me to have a peanut butter sandwich or a hamburger when I turned my nose up at dinner or at a restaurant (I have somewhat outgrown the habit, even though my grown daughters may not agree). When I moved to Japan with my husband right after our wedding, I discovered an entirely new culinary world. Much to my surprise I found that so many of the strange sounding and looking foods were very tasty (I learned not to ask what was in them until after sampling).



“The Tale of Peter Rabbit” was introduced to children in 1893 by Beatrix Potter. My grandmother read it to my mother; my mother read it to me; I read it to my girls and with each generation the story grew just a bit slower and duller – ‘classic’ comes to mind. Peter Rabbit has always been a mischievous soul sneaking into the luscious vegetable garden of Mr. McGregor. “Peter Rabbit” a new CGI animated adventure starring our beloved Peter, Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail hops on to theater screens everywhere bringing the CGI characters to life as they sneak into the McGregor garden.

Peter (voiced by James Corden) remains the mischievous little guy he’s always been, but with a bit of a twist – as we say in Texas, he’s a downright ornery little varmint. Despite the walls and gates protecting the McGregor garden, Peter usually manages to find a way through the defenses and help himself to the yummy treats awaiting him, his family and friends all the while remembering that his long, lost dad suffered his demise in the McGregor garden.

Now is the time for a ‘spoiler alert’ ... in the modern version of “Peter Rabbit” Peter shows a feisty side when encountering McGregor. Scurrying here and there with Mr. McGregor (Sam Neill) hot on his heels, Peter almost meets the same end as his father when McGregor keels over in the garden. Yep, his old ticker finally gives out. In the politically correct world in which we live, one might draw the conclusion that the young Peter bullied the poor old man who was just trying to protect the garden he loved. A few minutes into the scene, the writers Lieber and Gluck do try and make amends saying the man did not make many good life choices, he should have eaten more veggies from his garden, but the impression remains that he passed in the garden chasing after Peter. Now what are the furry creatures to do, but move into the McGregor manor and P-A-R-T-Y!!

The party turns out to be short-lived as the estate is inherited by McGregor’s nephew Thomas (Domhall Gleeson). A prim and proper sort of guy trying to recuperate from a major melt down at his job at Harrods department store when passed over for a promotion due to nepotism, Thomas figures that a little time in the country might do him some good while enabling him to plot his revenge against Harrods.

Bea (Rose Byrne), a true friend of Peter and his furry friends lives next door to the McGregor manor acting as their protector. Life goes south, however, when Thomas and Bea meet and sparks begin to ignite (it is a kids’ movie). Their attraction is not received well by Peter who turns into a long-eared Kevin McAllister from “Home Alone.”

Despite the trailers and some questionable scenes, “Peter Rabbit” is a pleasant surprise. The story moves along and the script is discernibly different when it comes to entertaining both the little ones as well as their parents. The animals come alive and ‘pop’ off the screen (even though it wasn’t 3D) retelling the story, although director Will Gluck does let some of the darker sides of bullying and mischievousness come through. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “Peter Rabbit” TWO 1/2 HARTS. Some flashbacks to “Animal House” come to mind at times, but it’s still entertaining.