

The floor tasted gross. I bet you're wondering why I licked it to begin with. Well, one minute, I'm swapping jokes about gym class, and the next I'm staring at hundreds of crumbs scattered across the floor, and a lot of kindergarteners untied shoes. Instead of asking how I felt, I wondered what those crumbs tasted like, and the minute my tongue grazed them, nosey Sherry Finch glanced down. Instead of keeping it to herself, she screams as if she'd swallowed the mouthful of stale sandwich crumbs. To save face, I screamed the first thing that came to mind. "Rat!"



I stumbled upon the writing prompt, *The floor tasted...* I've never wondered what a floor tasted like, but the vision of a busy school cafeteria came to mind, and then I thought about the time we watched *How To Fry Worms*. Look, I'm not against worms, but I'll admit the scene where the kid finally eats the worms made me more than a little squeamish. The same way I'd feel if I witnessed someone licking a school cafeteria floor. I can deal with my kid's gaping wound that required an ambulance and multiple stitches. I can cope with retrieving a shark head from the dog. Okay, that last one deserves a story of its own, but take my word for it. I retrieved a few too many sharks from the dog back on the island.

But with food, I get squeamish fast. I grew up on a hobby farm, and am more than aware of where our food comes from. Yet, talking about it while I'm trying to eat? Hard no. When my kids were younger, we were at my mother-in-laws for dinner and she'd made chicken drumsticks. Except she hadn't cooked all the way through, and the minute one child discovered this, he started making jokes about the poor chicken. I didn't finish dinner. I went on a meat strike for a while after watching a documentary about kingfishers.

The thing is, my squeamishness about food isn't limited to meat. Textures throw me, too. Especially if things are supposed to be smooth but have lumps in them. Things that should be

crunchy but are slimy, like cooked spinach, are an absolute do not make me eat it or I will throw up on the table. Thankfully, my oddities never impacted my boys, who had no qualms about naming their sandwiches before consuming them. Or making horror stories up about Bananas In Pajamas before consuming their own bananas.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go deep breath and block this entire story from my mind or I may have to serve ice water and carrots for dinner tonight. Uncooked carrots, for the record, because cooked carrots are disgustingly sweet, and don't even get me started on candied carrots!

The Reluctant Author.

