Everybody Brought Potatoes



Bark-B-Q is hosting Friendsgiving, and Eggs-Benedict has made a sign-up sheet so that nobody brings the same thing. Then Belgian-Waffle drops the sheet in the duck pond. He only read one word on it, so that’s the word he tells everybody.



The leaves in Bark-B-Q’s garden had turned the colour of toast.

“This year,” said Bark-B-Q, “I’m having Friendsgiving. A Thanksgiving feast with all my friends, here, under the apple tree. Everyone brings one dish.”

He wagged so hard that three leaves fell off the tree.



Eggs-Benedict arrived the next morning with a clipboard and a sharp pencil.

“One dish each is a lovely idea,” she said. “But what if everybody brings soup?”

She drew a sign-up sheet with two columns, **Name** and **Dish**. Then she drew a timing chart, so every dish would be hot at exactly the right moment.



“Write yours first,” she said, “to show everyone how.”

Bark-B-Q took the pencil and wrote in big letters on the top line:

Bark-B-Q — potatoes, roasted.

“Perfect,” said Eggs-Benedict. “Now we need someone fast to take it round.”



Belgian-Waffle was the fastest messenger in the woods. He tucked the sign-up sheet under one wing and took off.

“Every door before lunch!” he called.



Over the duck pond, a gust of wind came out of nowhere. It snatched the sheet from under his wing.

The paper flipped twice, sailed over the reeds and landed in the water. By the time Belgian-Waffle fished it out, the ink had run into one long blue puddle.



Belgian-Waffle looked at the soggy paper. He thought about flying back to tell Eggs-Benedict.

Then he thought about her sharp pencil.

“I read the top line,” he told himself. “I know what it said. I’ll just tell everybody.”



Meow-inara opened her door. “Is it the sign-up sheet? What should I bring?”

“Potatoes,” said Belgian-Waffle. “I think.”

“Potatoes,” said Meow-inara. “All right.”



“Potatoes?” said Leo-Lemonade. “I always bring lemonade.”

“This year it’s potatoes,” said Belgian-Waffle. “I’m fairly sure.”

“Potatoes? Not bread?” said French-Toast.

“Definitely potatoes,” said Belgian-Waffle. He was getting better at saying it.



On Friendsgiving afternoon, the long table stood under the apple tree. Bark-B-Q had his potatoes ready for roasting. Eggs-Benedict pinned her timing chart to the tree trunk.

“Four o’clock, soup,” she read. “Quarter past, bread. Half past, lemonade. Quarter to five…”



The gate creaked. Meow-inara came in, pulling a sack.

It was full of potatoes.

“Lovely,” said Bark-B-Q, a little puzzled. “Two lots of potatoes. That’s fine.”



The gate creaked again. Leo-Lemonade came in, pushing a wheelbarrow.

In the wheelbarrow was one potato. It was the biggest potato anyone had ever seen.

“I wanted to bring a good one,” he said.



Then French-Toast arrived with a basket of long orange potatoes.

“Sweet potatoes,” he said proudly.

Everybody looked at Eggs-Benedict.

“A sweet potato isn’t a potato at all,” said Eggs-Benedict. “It grows on a completely different plant. It’s a cousin of the morning glory flower.”



“So I’m the only one who didn’t bring potatoes?” said French-Toast.

“You’re the only one who did it by accident,” said Leo-Lemonade.

Then the gate creaked one last time. Belgian-Waffle came in with a small bag of potatoes and a very small voice.



Everybody looked at Belgian-Waffle.

Belgian-Waffle looked at his feet.

“The sheet fell in the duck pond,” he said. “The only thing I could read was the top line. So I told everybody potatoes.”



For a moment, nobody said anything.

Bark-B-Q looked at the timing chart. Four o’clock, soup. There was no soup. Quarter past, bread. There was no bread. Half past, lemonade. There was one enormous potato in a wheelbarrow.

His tail stopped wagging. “Friendsgiving is ruined,” he said.



Eggs-Benedict took the timing chart down from the tree. She turned it over to the clean side.

“Then we need a new chart,” she said.

She wrote **POTATOES** in the middle of the paper and drew a circle round it. Then she drew lines coming out of the circle, like the spokes of a wheel.



“Who can make something out of potatoes?” she asked.

“Potato soup,” said Meow-inara.

“Potato bread,” said French-Toast. “And a sweet potato pie.”

“Potato waffles,” said Belgian-Waffle. “I make very good waffles.”

“Roast potatoes,” said Bark-B-Q, and his tail started to wag again, just a little.



Leo-Lemonade looked at his enormous potato. “I only know how to make lemonade.”

“Then you can help me,” said Eggs-Benedict, “and we’ll make the biggest pile of mashed potato in the woods.”

She cooked. He mashed. Leo-Lemonade turned out to be extremely good at mashing.



Soon every pot and pan in Bark-B-Q’s kitchen was busy. Meow-inara stirred the soup. French-Toast kneaded the dough. Belgian-Waffle heated the waffle iron.

Outside, Bark-B-Q turned the potatoes on the grill, slowly, the way a good roast likes.



Eggs-Benedict checked her new chart. There were no times on it at all. Just one line at the bottom: *Everything at five o’clock.*

At five o’clock exactly, everything was ready.



They carried it out to the table under the apple tree. Potato soup. Potato bread. Potato waffles. Roast potatoes. A mountain of mash. And a sweet potato pie.

“Six dishes,” said Eggs-Benedict, counting them with her pencil. “Six different ways.”



Bark-B-Q looked at the table for a long time.

“It isn’t what I planned,” he said.

“It’s better,” said Meow-inara. “Nobody in the whole woods has ever had a potato feast.”



Before they ate, everybody said one thing they were thankful for.

“Eggs-Benedict,” said Bark-B-Q, “for the second chart.”

“Leo-Lemonade,” said Eggs-Benedict, “for the mashing.”

“The duck pond,” said Leo-Lemonade, and everyone laughed, even Belgian-Waffle.



When it was Bark-B-Q’s turn again, he turned to Belgian-Waffle.

“And I’m thankful for you.”

“Me?” said Belgian-Waffle. “I ruined everything.”

“You made it the best Friendsgiving we’ve ever had,” said Bark-B-Q. “You just did it by accident.”



They ate until the lanterns came on in the apple tree. The sweet potato pie went last.

“The only thing on the table that wasn’t a potato,” said French-Toast, “and it was the first thing to go.”



As everybody was leaving, Eggs-Benedict took out a fresh sheet of paper. She wrote next year’s sign-up sheet there and then.

On the top line, in big letters, she wrote: *Everybody — potatoes.*

Underneath, in smaller letters, she wrote: *Belgian-Waffle — please carry this very carefully.*