

BRIEF JOURNEY into NUTRILSOPHY

Cereals

AUTHOR:
Irina-Anca Mureșan

ILLUSTRATOR:
Rucsandra Enache



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About NutriCOOLtura

The United Way Romania Foundation, with the support of Edenred and Kaufland Romania, has developed the NutriCOOLtura project, which aims to inform and help children develop healthy nutritional habits through reading and practical learning experiences.

The project also ensures the development of teachers' competencies in literacy and working with vulnerable groups, along with providing basic nutrition-related information. We offer support and information to parents to raise awareness of the importance of education, reading, and healthy nutrition for children, as well as for the entire family.

About UNITED WAY

United Way Romania's vision is of strong, supportive communities committed to helping people reach their potential. Our mission is to improve lives in our communities through giving and volunteerism.

NABU's Mission

NABU is a New York-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, with a mission to solve the imbalance in children's book creation and distribution, so all children can read and rise to their full potential.

About the ABC Lab

The ABC Lab is NABU's Authentic Book Creation Lab and is where NABU stories are born and come to life through workshops with local artists and writers. The workshops are a part of our goal to address the need for children's books in mother tongue languages. It is a peer-to-peer learning structure that enables a continuous learning loop and the exchange of skills and ideas, aimed at creating original and authentic mother tongue children's story books.

BRIEF JOURNEY INTO NUTRILOSOPHY: CEREALS



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Chapter 1 - A Journey Through Time

The dense, milky fog had swallowed everything around – from trees, rocky walls and mountain peaks to the white markings on the edge of the road. The minibus moved forward slowly, seemingly floating through a fantastic realm. The driver drove cautiously and smiled under his mustache while listening to the children's jokes and conversations.

Mia and Daria, along with a few classmates, left early in the morning for a field trip. Their history teacher had told them some time ago about a special place, located at the foot of the mountains, which housed a reserve with water mills, hundreds of years old. Of course, curiosity immediately fulfilled its mission and the children came up with the proposal to visit the reserve. Said and done. Planning, organization, boarding and... on the road! A group of enthusiastic hikers, on a winding mountain road and in a weather... not exactly friendly.

Daria was playing *What If?* with two colleagues, and

Mia had dozed off with her head resting on her friend's shoulder.

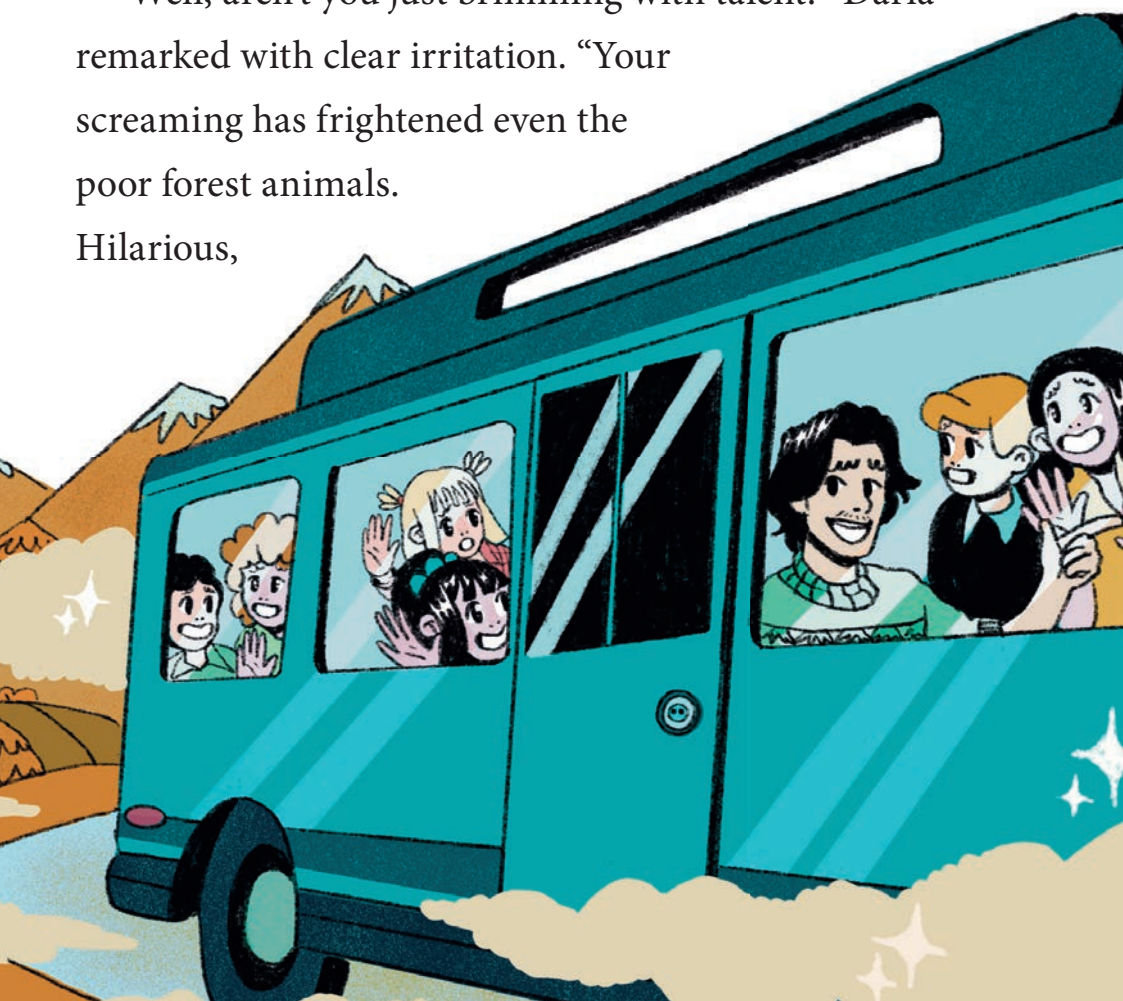
“Wake uuuup!” a loud shout was heard, followed by bursts of laughter.

It was Horia – the girls' classmate. He stood up from the back seat and took on the role of an alarm clock.

Mia startled and tried to come to her senses.

“Well, aren't you just brimming with talent!” Daria remarked with clear irritation. “Your screaming has frightened even the poor forest animals.

Hilarious,



really! Ha-ha-ha! Oh, let's all have a good laugh!”

Horia was having a great time. Mia wasn't upset at all. Although she had woken up suddenly, in the commotion caused by her talented classmate, she found it amusing to see him so pleased with his own prank. They were all good friends and occasionally played innocent pranks on each other.

“Come on, girls, let's get ready! We're approaching our destination. Look outside, my shouts even scared the fog away... that means it was worth it, right?” said Horia laughing, while high-fiving Mia.

Indeed, the fluffy swirls of fog were retreating. The landscape began to soften, leaving the winding roads behind. Not far from the riverbank, the cabin that would host the group of hikers appeared.

“We've arrived, children! That's it for motorized transportation today! We'll check in, gear up and walk the mountain paths until we reach the water mills,” the history teacher's voice was heard.

“Are the mills far, teacher?” asked Horia, who wasn't very fond of hiking.

“About 3-4 kilometers from the cabin, if we want to visit them all. We have the whole day at our disposal, we're not in a hurry to go anywhere. I'm convinced, Horia, that you'll only have pleasant surprises today,” the teacher encouraged him with a friendly pat on the shoulder.

The boy smiled politely, but didn't seem too excited. Horia was passionate about model making and created wonderful models, especially architectural ones. He also participated in MosaicFest Junior with all sorts of impressive miniatures. But... he didn't like hiking. Mia and Daria convinced him to come on the trip, tempting him with the idea that the water mills could inspire him to create some exceptional models.

The children checked in, had a snack and got moving. The old forest road was quite difficult, but the hikers, divided into groups and small groups, moved forward at a steady pace.

“Is there much more to walk?” Horia asked impatiently, quickening his pace.

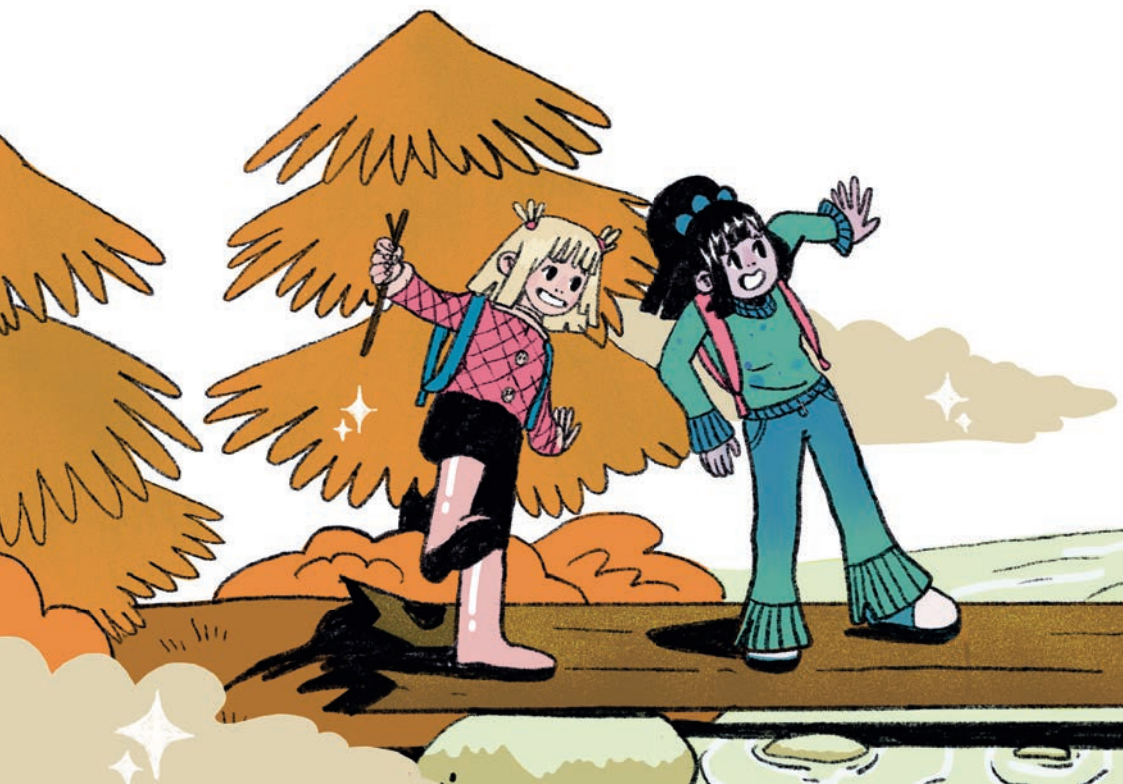
“Where are you running to? It's like you're training for a marathon,” Mia replied and grabbed his backpack to

slow him down a bit.

“Yeah... I know, but I want to get to the water mills right away, I'm already making all sorts of plans in my mind.”

The girls challenged Horia with a series of questions about his plans, and that's how they managed to calm his enthusiasm a bit.

The route followed the course of the river, which was gurgling agitated among the stones in its own riverbed. With each turn, the landscape offered another surprise, until, in the distance, the first water mill appeared. A



modest wooden house, hidden among clusters of fir trees, well guarded over hundreds of years by a rocky wall.

“Look, you can see the first mill!” shouted Horia as he separated from the group and ran off.

Curious, the children quickened their pace and followed him. The closer they got, the louder the noise became. The mill was being put to work. The sluice gate on the river was raised, and the streams of water squeezed into a chute and set in motion the horizontal wheel of the mill under the wooden house.



A boy with sharp eyes and a playful smile was feeding the mill with corn kernels and enthusiastically telling tourists the history of the reserve. Mia, Daria and Horia watched fascinated as the two huge, smooth, round stones did their job perfectly, crushing the corn kernels until they turned into flour.

“Welcome, dear guests! I am Petrișor – the storyteller-miller. Come closer to see how the corn is ground.”

The three complied and listened carefully to Petrișor's explanations. The boy was full of humor and vividly told all sorts of interesting things about water mills. He knew everything from his Grandpa, whom he often liked to help when he came from school.

Excited, Horia went down to the riverbank with Petrișor to see the mill's water wheel and better understand how the entire machinery works. Meanwhile, the girls also took a map from the local producers' shop at the entrance to the reserve. Then, they visited all ten archaic mills scattered along the river gorges with Petrișor.

“It's time to return to the cabin, children!” the history teacher's voice was heard. “Petrișor, wouldn't you like to



visit us later?”

“Yes, Petrișor, we'd be happy to chat more!” added a few voices.

“I'll come... thank you,” Petrișor replied, a little embarrassed by so much attention.

“Great, we're waiting for you, Petrișor! See you later!”

Chapter 2 - Bon Appétit with... Bread

The mild and inviting smell of baked bread floated in every corner of the cabin. The children were having their meal and eagerly eating fresh bread, made from whole wheat flour and oat flakes.

“I've never eaten such good bread, ever!” said Daria, with her eyes closed, while lazily swaying her head and chewing the crispy crust. “I don't want to eat anything else today, just plain bread.”

“But you don't like bread, Daria, you barely eat a slice usually...” said Mia surprised.

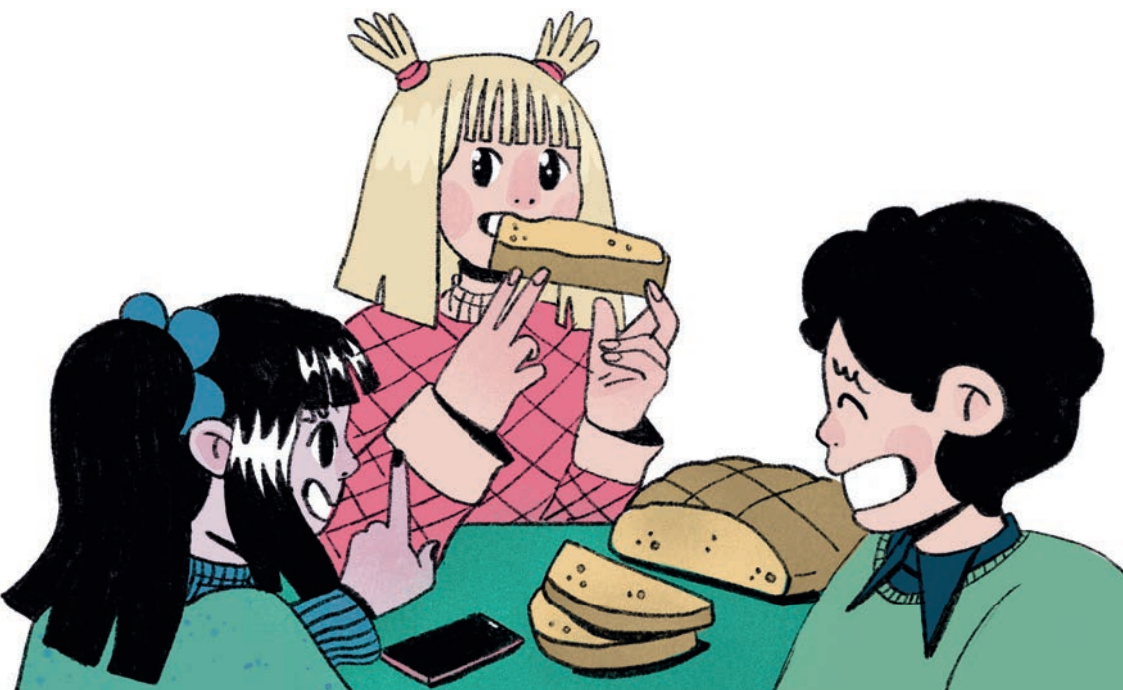
“Hmm... but this isn't just bread... it's a delicacy.”

“Heeey, Daria, soon you'll turn into a giant wheat grain, if you keep eating at this rate,” Horia joked. “Aaa... and instead of hair, you'll grow a lot of wheat ears.”

“Ha-ha-ha! Funny as always! But... if I think about it, I wouldn't look bad with such a spiky, wheat-ear hairstyle,” Daria laughed. “Come on, better put that rich imagination of yours to work, Horică, and make the model for the festival.”

The three laughed heartily and each took another bite of the golden brown bread.

“Aaa, I got it, I know what I'll prepare for the festival!” Mia suddenly exclaimed with enthusiasm. “Cereal



preparations. Rof Nutrilosoph said that cereals are very important in nutrition. I remember from the first nutri-losophy lesson.”

“Very good idea, Mia, I like it. If you make a super-fantastic bread... I won't leave your stand!” Daria laughed. “I say we take the ingredients from here – whole wheat flour, cereal flakes, bran and whatever else we find.”

“That's what we'll do!” Mia agreed. “What do you say, shall we have a chat with our friend Rof later? I'd like to learn more about cereals.”

“Sure, we'll wait for Petrișor and have a nutrilosophical teleconference. Does Rof know anything about models too?” Horia joked.

“No, dear Horică, I think you should look for a Modelosoph for that,” Daria directed him, nudging Mia in complicity.

After the meal, the three set out to explore the surroundings and discussed more about water mills, cereals and Horia's models. On their return, near the cabin, they spotted Petrișor coming on his bicycle. Horia went out to meet him.

“Hello! Welcome, friend!” he said happily.

“Hello to you, too! I brought corn kernels from my Grandpa, I thought we could make some corn snacks... or popcorn as they call it in the city.”

“Oh, how nice! Healthy munching is welcome when you're chatting!” said Mia, then took the bag of kernels from Petrișor.

They all ate popcorn and listened to the humorous stories told by Petrișor. He was the master of ceremonies for the evening – he prepared the popcorn outside, in a large cast iron pot, over the fire, without adding a drop of oil. The result – a true culinary treat.

“Dear Petrișor, today we give you another title – you're not just the storyteller-miller but also the most fantastic popcorn-preparer! Ta-daaaa!” declared Daria and started applauding.

Petrișor bowed politely to the audience and received the children's cheers with humbleness and joy.

Chapter 3 - Popcorn Through the Ages

Mia retreated to a quieter corner of the cabin's dining room and turned on the laptop. She was eager to meet Rof Nutrilosoph and surprise him with the large audience that evening.

“Hello, Mia! What a joy to see you!” said Rof, making a characteristic bow.

“Nice to see you again, my dear Rof! Look what I'm eating – I've moved from apple chips to popcorn! Without salt and without fats!” emphasized Mia.

“An excellent snack! Well done! You're already a nutrilosophy intern, dear Mia, you've started making your own healthy choices,” Rof rejoiced. “Should I understand that today you want to talk about cereals and carbohydrates?”

“As always, you read my thoughts, friend! Yes, that's right, I'd like to go to the festival with a NutriPlate rich in cereals and...”

“And who is the wisest mentor always ready to lend

a hand? Rof Nutrilosoph, of course!” Daria intervened cheerfully, blowing kisses to Rof from behind Mia.

“Hey, Daria, what a surprise!” chuckled Rof, clapping his hands.

“Yes, I surprised you, we're a real team of apprentices,” said Mia laughing. “Beside us is Horia, whom you already know, and Petrișor, our new friend – famous storyteller-miller and recently enstated master popcorn-preparer.”

“Oh, my dears, I am particularly delighted! I'm glad to meet you, Petrișor. And... allow me to ennoble you with a title as well – from today you will also be a beginner-nutrilosopher.”

The children laughed heartily, took the bowl of popcorn and all crowded in front of the laptop.

“Thank you, Rof,” Petrișor was heard. “Today I've really collected titles. I'll display them all at the mill, for tourists to marvel at when they visit. You should know that I'm very interested in learning more about cereals.”

“I want to tell my Grandpa too, who has been a miller all his life... he planted the corn from which we made the popcorn today.”

“I'm glad, I'm glad,” said Rof. “Popcorn is healthy, if we don't add fats and too much salt. It's very rich in fiber, contains carbohydrates and antioxidants. If you made it yourself... it's more than tasty – they say that when you cook for friends, the food has even more flavor. By the way, did you know that you're now having an... ancient snack?”

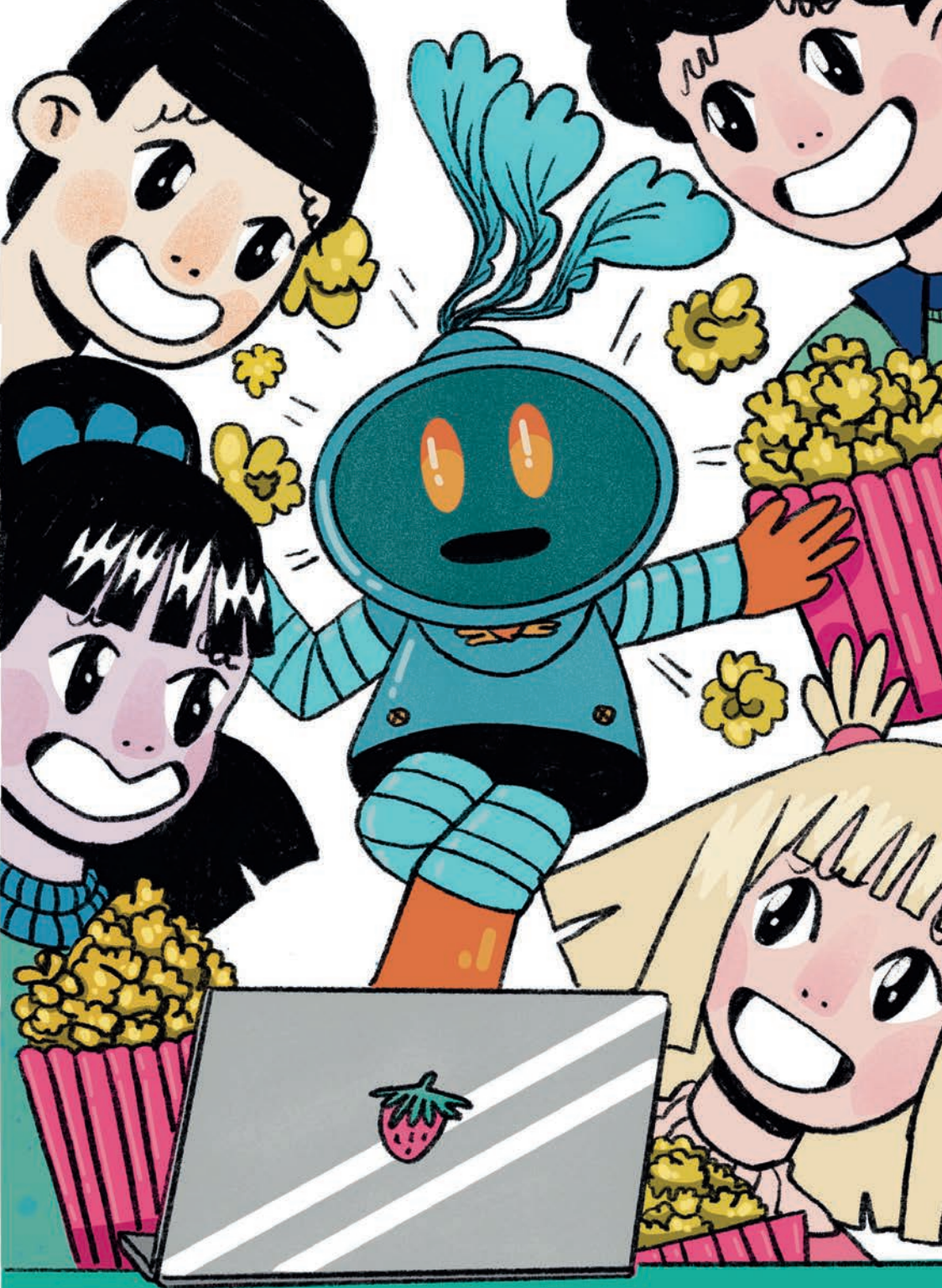
Total amazement on the faces of the apprentices. They all looked at the popcorn with surprise.

“What do you mean ancient, Rof? I thought popcorn appeared in North America, when people started watching movies and needed something to munch on,” said Horia puzzled.

“No, Horia, you need to go back about 6,000 years on the time scale and take a step a bit further south, to Mexico and even Peru.”

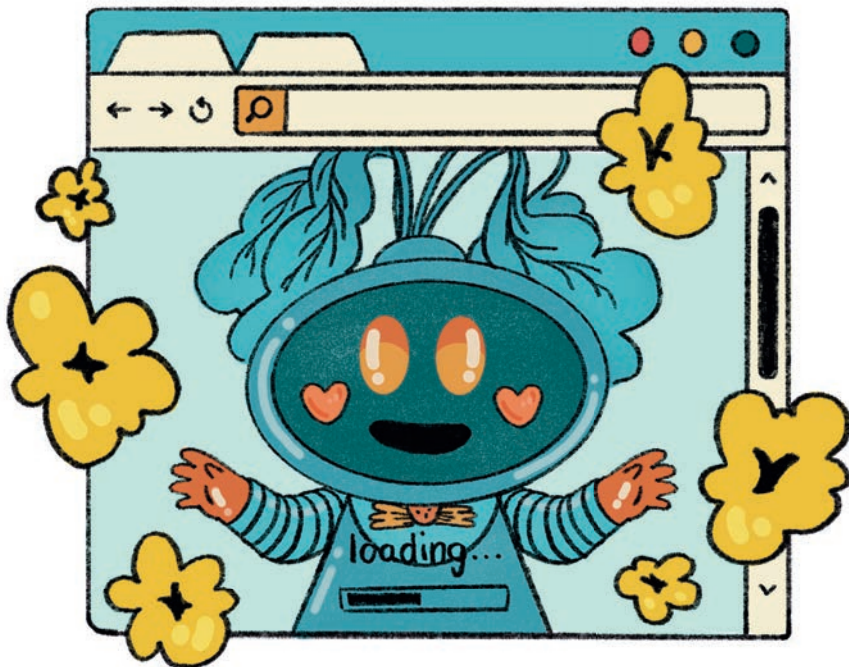
“Well yes, it's logical if we consider that corn also originates from that area,” added Mia. “Who knows how someone, thousands of years ago, dropped a few kernels in the fire pit and those started popping like fireworks.”

“Then... much respect to popcorn and those who



discovered it!” said Daria with gusto and gobbled up some more popcorn.

Rof smiled and sent a virtual hug from across the screen. Everyone was feeling wonderful, and Petrișor was very excited about the new discoveries.



Chapter 4 - Health in... Cereals

“But... almost all cereals have a respectable age, or rather, they've been on earth since the beginning of time, right, Rof?” asked Horia.

“Well noted! Yes, that's about right... if we imagine that the world as we know it began to take shape with the emergence of agriculture, about 10,000 years ago, you're right. Around the same time, people began to cultivate plants such as corn, wheat, and rice in different corners of the world – corn in Central America, rice in Southeast Asia, and wheat in a region of southwestern Asia, very fertile, whose shape resembles a horn or a crescent.”

“I think I know what it's called – the Horn of Plenty or the Fertile Crescent, correct? And it's considered the cradle of civilization,” Mia intervened.

“Well done Mia, you're right! People began to domesticate plants and animals and, little by little, they changed from hunter-gatherers to farmers.”

“Oh, well you should see what a horn of plenty my stand will be at MosaicFest Junior, with cereals at the

center of attention.”

On the laptop screen, a pile of spikes and grains of all kinds arranged themselves in a crescent. The friendly Rof immediately took advantage of the opportunity and lounged in it as if in a hammock.

“Yes, you remembered very well. Cereals contain complex carbohydrates such as *starch and fibers*, but especially whole grains – wheat, oats, rye, corn, barley, rice, are also rich in *vitamins and minerals*.”



“Whole, meaning with bran and all, like the grains we grind at the mill?” Petrișor intervened.

“Exactly, Petrișor! The cereal grain is made up of three parts – the outer shell or bran as you rightly said earlier, the endosperm and the germ – from which a new plant is born, very rich in nutrients. The outer shell and germ contain many fibers, B vitamins, vitamin E, minerals such as iron, magnesium, zinc, potassium, calcium, selenium, but also antioxidants. The endosperm is rich in carbohydrates in the form of starch and a protein specific to cereals called *gluten*. When white flour is produced, the outer shell, i.e. the bran and the germ, are removed, so the fibers, vitamins and minerals from the grain are pretty much lost.”

“Ahaaa, so the bread we ate today was not only delicious but also super healthy! I knew it, that's why I ate a double portion!” exclaimed Daria with gusto.

“Which double, I think you ate the portion for three days, we couldn't stop you!” Horia laughed while puffing up his cheeks and mimicking chewing with a full mouth.

Horia and Daria began to playfully frolic, as they usually did, to the amusement of the others.

“With all the energy you have, I think you've all exceeded your carbohydrate portion for today, dears!” said Rof, chuckling.

“That's about right, friend,” Mia agreed, “some have even exaggerated. But... so we don't exaggerate in the future, or at least know if we're doing it, please help us with a nutrilosophical advice – what does a portion of cereals mean?”

“Sure, Mia, I was actually waiting for this question from you. A portion of cereals means: a slice of bread or half a cup of rice, polenta, cooked pasta, or, a cup of cereal flakes. Attention, my dears, you can eat between 5-7 portions per day, but the number of portions varies depending on age and physical activity you do.”

“Ha-ha!” rejoiced Daria. “With all the movement we did today to the water mills and back, I could eat another two slices of bread.”

“Beep! Wrong answer! Don't forget that popcorn also

counts, it contains carbohydrates,” Horia completed, pleased with his insight.

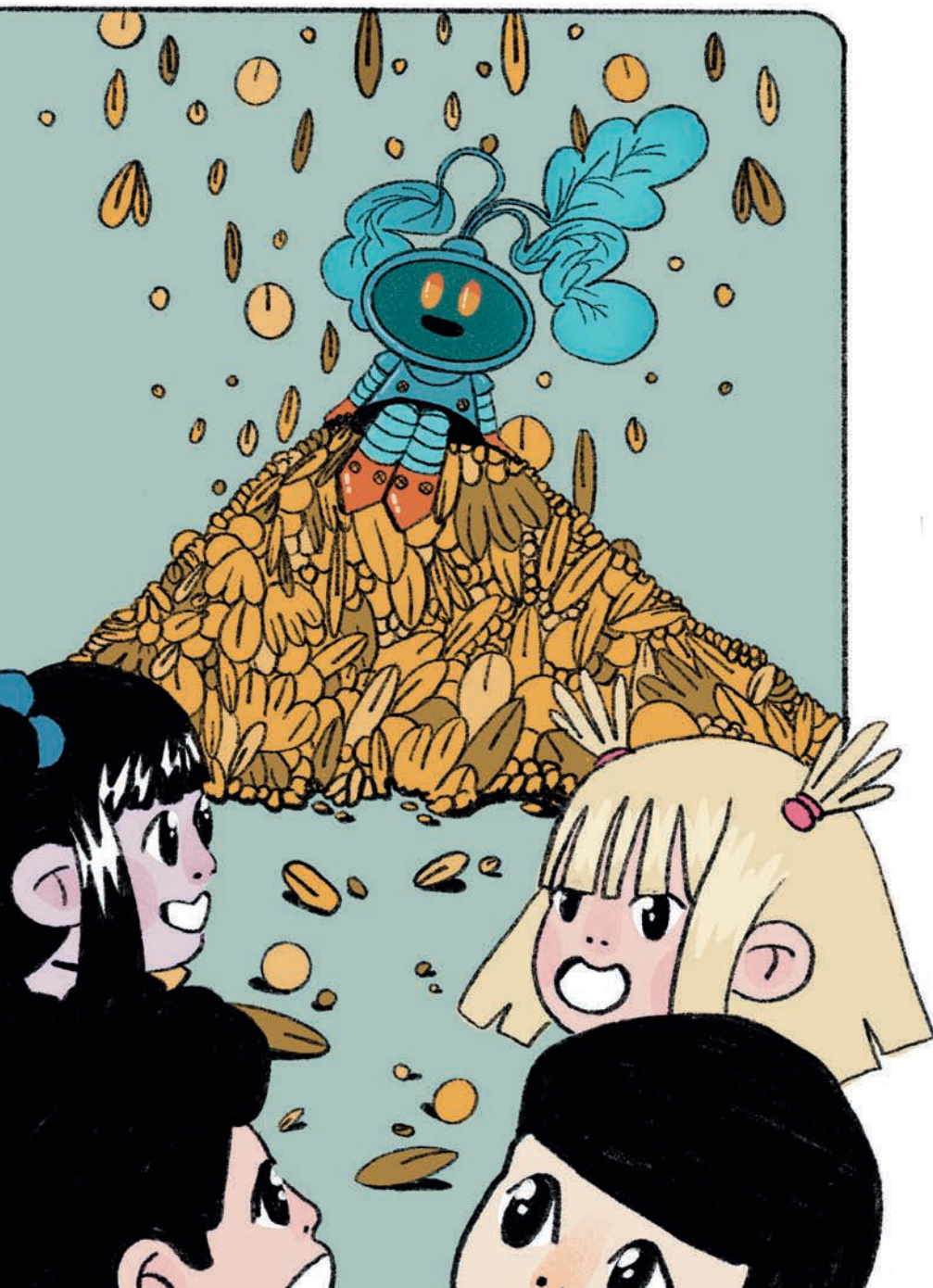
“Just remember,” Rof continued, “that variety and balance are important at every meal. Only a quarter of a healthy plate is occupied by cereals.”

“Yes, yes, I remember, Rof, another quarter is reserved for proteins and the rest... fruits and vegetables in abundance,” Mia completed. “Now that you've brought up diversity, I need to think carefully about what kind of combinations I'll make for the festival.”

“Don't worry, Mia, you have a lot of possibilities. Here, to further diversify... diversity, I come with a suggestion – you can add some pseudocereals to your NutriPlate,” said Rof.

On the screen, a rain of white, black, yellow, brown, larger and smaller grains began to pour until the friendly assistant ended up perched on top of a mountain. The apprentices were left without jokes, without words, without voice – with their eyes wide open, trying to interpret Rof's words in some way.





Chapter 5 - Healthy Breakfast

“You mean... false cereals?!” Mia dared to ask.

“Exactly!” Rof applauded her, while rolling down from the top of the mountain of grains. “Pseudocereals are plants that resemble cereals from a nutritional point of view, but botanically, they are not part of the same family, that of Gramineae. We consume them in the same way we consume cereals, they have a high content of vitamins, minerals and complex carbohydrates, but do not contain gluten. Quinoa, buckwheat and amaranth successfully represent the category of pseudocereals. They are very tasty in combinations with vegetables or can be healthy breakfast options.”

“Aaa, yes, I ate at breakfast – a kind of quinoa pudding with all sorts of fruits, I liked it,” said Horia, “but I didn't know it was a pseudocereal and neither that it was so healthy.”

“Excellent!” said Mia. “I think I ate buckwheat a while ago too. I will introduce them to the menu. Speaking of breakfast, Rof, is it healthy to eat cereals with milk or

yogurt in the morning?”

“It depends on what kind of cereals and how... they are.”

“How??” they all asked in chorus.

“Processed!” Mia burst out.

“That's right! Wonderful! You remembered from our first nutrilosophical meeting, Mia. Industrially produced breakfast cereals generally contain a lot of sugar and all kinds of additives. My advice is to read the list of ingredients very carefully when you buy them. It would be good to replace them with whole grain ones, without sugar, and don't forget fruits.”

“In the morning I usually eat polenta or oatmeal. Oatmeal is very tasty.”

“Very good, Petrișor! Both polenta and oatmeal are excellent.”

“Oatmeal? I haven't eaten it, but I'd like to try it,” said Daria.

“I invite you to taste it in a few days, at the festival,” Mia confirmed. “I already have too long a list, I need to make a selection. Anyway, it will be a NutriPlate full of energy, I'm sure of that. I can't wait to get to work.”

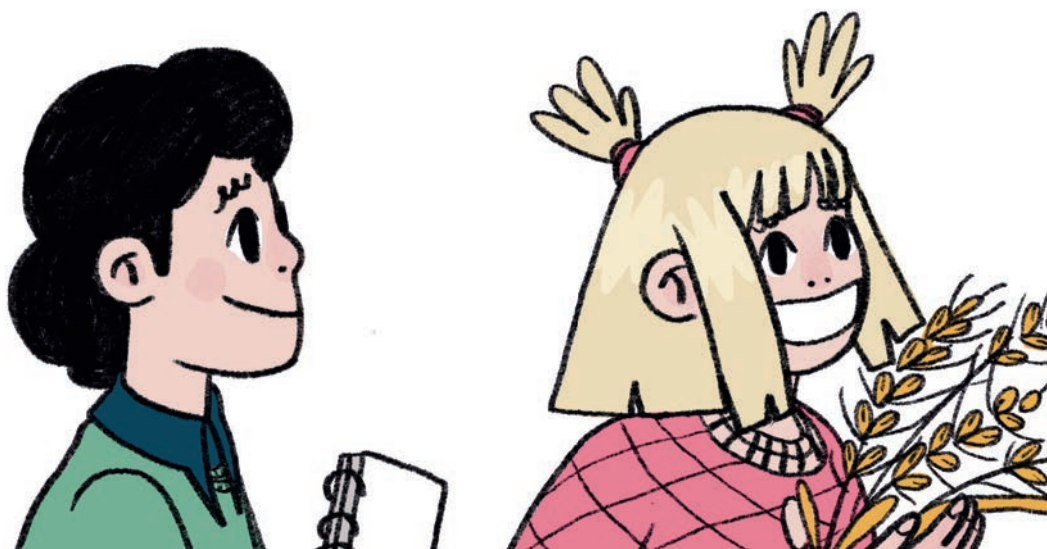
“Thank you, my dear Rof! The time spent with you is always magical. It passes so quickly and yet I discover a lot of new and interesting things!”

“Yeees, thank you Rof, you are a true master – I would never have believed that a nutrilosophy lesson could captivate me, especially about cereals,” Daria was heard saying.

“May it serve you well, my dears, and may you eat increasingly healthier. Good luck at the festival!”

“Thank you! Goodbye, Rof Nutrilosoph!”

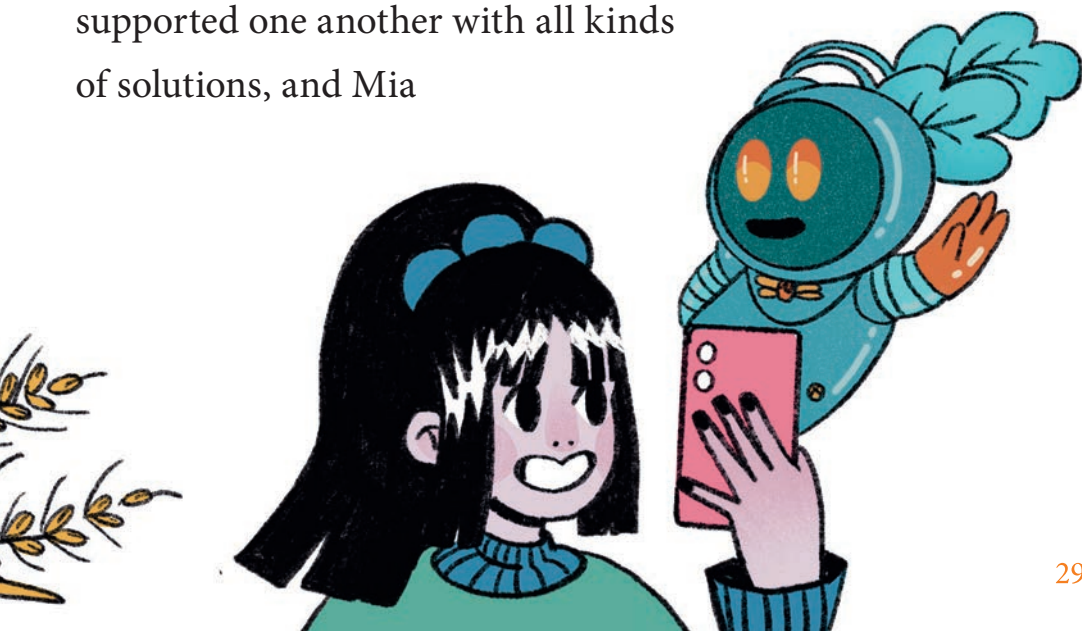
The children sent all sorts of cute emoticons and Rof Nutrilosoph retreated with a smile on his lips and a graceful bow.



Chapter 6 - Four Friends, One Story

The next day, around noon, the hikers left for home. Horia invited Petrișor to the festival and they agreed that they would assemble and exhibit the water mill models together.

Mia had the menu prepared in her mind, Horia had a sketch of a mill on a sheet of paper, and Daria... a head full of ideas and two armfuls of wheat spikes and corn husks – the raw material for her artistic creations. In short, much to do before the festival. But also a lot of enthusiasm... and... a new friend. The four of them kept in touch, consulted each other, exchanged ideas, supported one another with all kinds of solutions, and Mia



had one last meeting with Rof on the morning of the festival and received another dose of confidence.

All three stands looked exceptional. Horia and Petrișor were working on the final touches to the model of a mill, Daria was decorating a few wreaths made of corn husks, and Mia was arranging the last bowls of oatmeal, fruits and honey.

“Phew, done, I finished!” said Horia and high-fived Petrișor.

“They look wonderful, boys! Your mills are jewels,” Mia complimented them.

“Oh no, the shelf with the mosaics made of grains and seeds is collapsing! Help me, please!” Daria was lamenting desperately.

In a flash, Horia and Petrișor were at Daria's stand and managed to prevent the disaster in the art world. Problem solved!

“Thank you, thank you! What a scare I had, right at the opening hour.”

“What would you do without us, Daria? Your creations with grains and seeds were about to become food for the

park birds.”

“Well... you have a sharp tongue even when someone's in trouble, talented Horică!” Daria responded, bursting into laughter.

“Let's eat some popcorn and catch our breath until the visitors arrive,” Mia suggested.

They all gathered in front of the *Harmony in NutriPlate* stand, ate popcorn, laughed and chatted. In a short time, the great hustle and bustle began, and visitors stormed the stands.

“Good morning, teacher! Welcome! Can I serve you something tasty and healthy?”

Mia welcomed the history teacher, who promised the children he would come to the festival, impressed by the passion with which they made their plans during the field trip.

“Good morning, Mia! Sure, with pleasure, I trust your recommendations.”

While the history teacher was savoring a NutriPlate with whole grain pasta and vegetables, Horia, Daria and Petrișor approached.



A cartoon illustration of a person with dark hair, wearing a green sweater with a pattern of stylized trees on the sleeves. They are wearing a blue graduation cap with a tassel. On top of their head is a large stack of gold coins. The person is looking towards the right.

“Oh, teacher, you managed to come to the festival!”

“Of course I came, cheerful team, how could I miss it? What you've done here is extraordinary, I'm very proud of you!”

“Well... it's also your contribution in everything we've done, you encouraged us all the time and you knew exactly where to take us to receive the impulse we needed,” Mia said sincerely.

“Yes, that's true, Mia is right,” Horia added. “And indeed, during the trip we only had pleasant surprises, as you said. Thank you very much, teacher!”

“And we can't wait for a repeat,” Daria chuckled.

Another day of festival, another success.

A charming nutrilosopher, four friends and one story. The story of cereals, expressed in three different

languages, which reflected the passions of some clever and creative children. A delicious NutriPlate, some traditional water mills and a few ingeniously decorated spikes – all these, together, accompanied the festival visitors on a unique journey, full of flavor, skill and color.





CEREALS ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY I

*NutriPlates... * favorites**

On the third day of the MosaicFest Junior festival, Mia, Daria, Horia and Petrișor each choose a favorite NutriPlate. Rof Nutrilosoph hastily notes down the culinary preferences of the four friends in a table, but... he doesn't remember which is the favorite dish of each of them.

The wise Rof doesn't give up. With the help of the clues below, he manages to solve the mystery of the favorite NutriPlates.

You try too! Discover what is the favorite dish of each character.

1. Read each clue carefully.
2. If you think you can eliminate a certain variant, write NO in that space in the table.

3. If you have managed to identify a character's favorite dish, write YES in the corresponding space.

	Popcorn	Rice Pudding	Oatmeal	Quinoa Pudding
Mia				
Petrișor				
Daria				
Horia				

Clues:

1. Mia's favorite NutriPlate contains a cereal whose grains are not yellow.
2. The cereal in Horia's favorite dish... isn't actually a cereal.
3. Daria sits next to one of her friends, who is eating rice pudding.
4. Petrișor jokes with a person whose NutriPlate contains a cereal originating from Southeast Asia.
5. The name of the „cereal” that forms the basis of Horia's favorite dish has four vowels.

6. Mia is talking to one of her friends, who is eating oatmeal.
7. The cereal in Daria's dish comes from Central America.
8. The name of Daria's favorite dish contains five consonants.
9. Mia is looking at someone who is eating quinoa pudding.
10. Daria's dish is a snack, and Petrişor's dish is a healthy breakfast.

2. Rof Nutrilosoph's Curiosities

Rof Nutrilosoph has prepared for you a list with 10 various curiosities gathered from around the world.

Search, research and complete Rof's list with other interesting, even amusing information about cereals. Then „exchange curiosities” with colleagues.

1. In the 1800s, popcorn was often consumed with milk and sugar, for breakfast.

2. The word companion comes from Latin, from the derivation of the words com which means „with” and panis, which means „bread”, that is... „the one with whom you share your bread”.

3. The oldest bread in Romania is over 130 years old and is at the History Museum in Galați.

4. Popcorn was not just an important food in Aztec civilization – it was also used to create decorations and ornaments that were used in various ceremonies.

5. The Great Wall of China was built with the help of... rice. The stone blocks were glued together with a mortar made from rice porridge mixed with slaked lime.

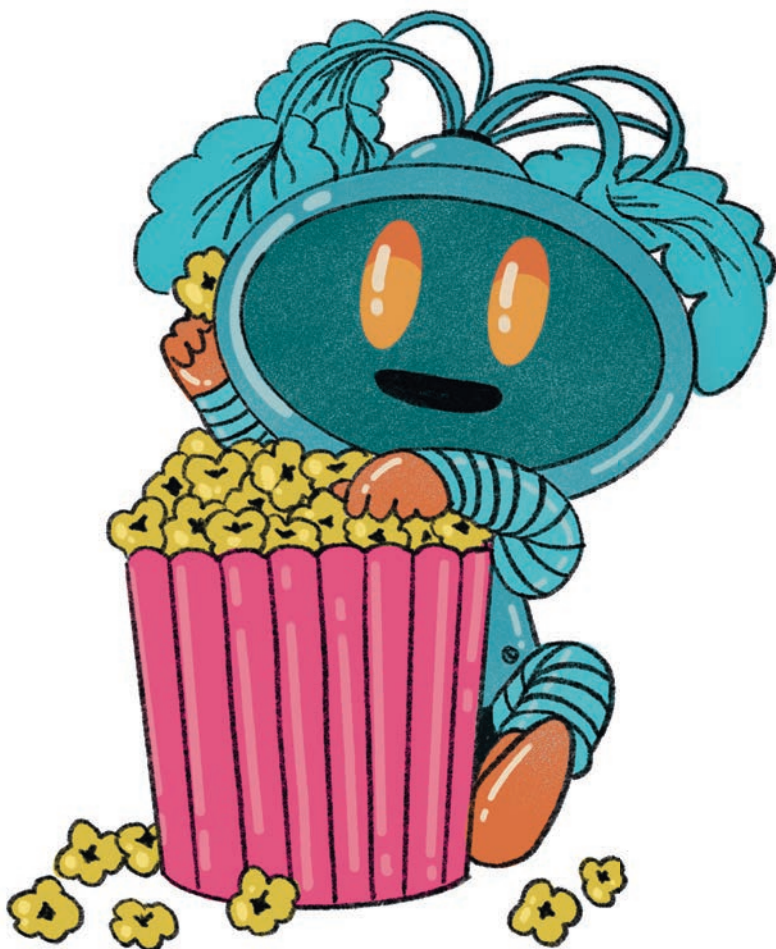
6. The first commercial popcorn machine was created by Charles Cretors in 1885.

7. Bread was so important to ancient Egyptians that it was used as currency.

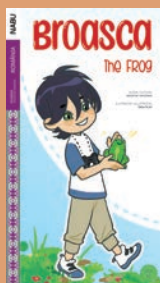
8. From a single rice seed, over 3,000 grains can develop.

9. A 100-gram serving of quinoa contains approximately 20% of the recommended daily value of dietary fiber, protein, B vitamins, magnesium, phosphorus and manganese.

10. The most important carbohydrate for all living organisms, including humans, is glucose.



OTHER TITLES FROM THE NABU APP



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