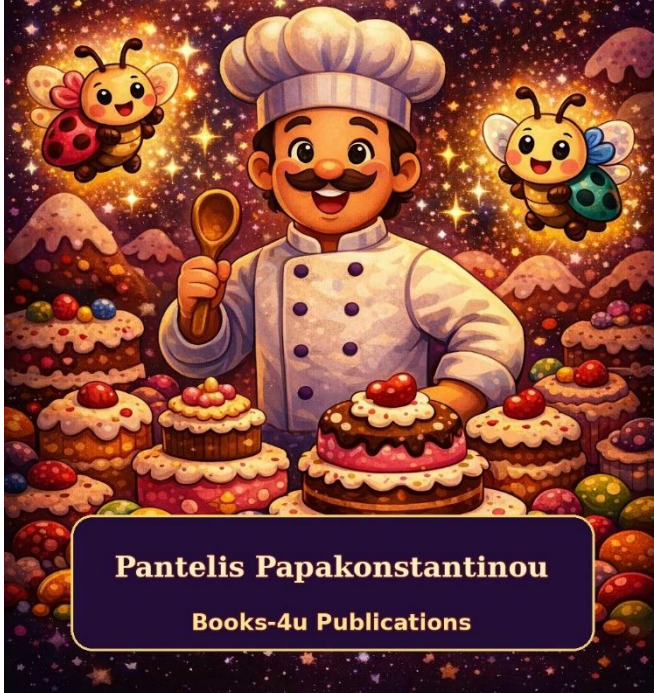


PROFESSIONS
**Charalampos the
Pastry Chef**

A children's story for young and old



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Books-4u Publications

Charalampos the Pastry Chef and Little Fifi and Fofi

A story from the “Professions” series

A children’s story for young and old

Prologue

This story is part of a series of children’s stories under the main title “Professions”. Its purpose is to introduce children to career orientation while combining knowledge with humor and the funny side of life, making the story more interesting.

In all the stories, the main hero is Charalampos. His friends Lefteris and Panagiotis also take part, often changing professions depending on Charalampos’s profession in each story.

I was inspired to create Charalampos and his friends while playing with my grandson Marios. In every story, there is a glossary of unfamiliar words so that young children can understand the difficult words.

For today's tale, I was inspired by my granddaughter Evelina, who asked me to write a story with a cockroach. However, after my son Theodoris suggested it, I created two female beetles, Fifi and Fofi, while still leaving the impression in the air that they might have been cockroaches.

I think this is my first true fairy tale, because I go beyond the limits of logic and enter the borders of imagination.

I was also inspired to create the Charalampos of this story by my beloved Uncle Panagiotis, who was a great pastry chef.

(Chef means the head cook, the head pastry chef, the master or artist of cooking.)

Charalampos the Pastry Chef and Little Fifi and Fofi

Charalampos has a very important profession: he is a pastry chef.

A pastry chef offers people—who usually want to enjoy themselves when they go out—delicious sweets and ice creams in his pastry shop, as well as take-away desserts to bring home. He also makes beautiful cakes for celebrations and birthdays, and for other occasions such as anniversaries and weddings.

Charalampos was born around 1900 in the village of Delvino in Northern Epirus.

At the age of nine, because of the intense conflict with the Chams, his family managed to escape by crossing over to Corfu in a small boat.

There, everyone had to work in order to live.

The family had nine children: seven boys and two girls.

His father, Panagiotis, who was responsible for the family, asked him what he wanted to become. Since Charalampos had a sweet tooth and loved desserts, he said to his father: “Dad, I want to become a pastry chef.”

(Here I explain that “conflict” means struggle, battle, or rivalry. The Chams, or Tsamides, were a subgroup of Albanians who lived in the region of Epirus, in an area known as Chameria.)

In Corfu

In Corfu there was the “Papagiorgis” pastry shop, which was famous and still exists today. Mr. Vasilis, his father, had an acquaintance who worked there, and he asked him to take Charalampos as an apprentice, which is exactly what happened.

Charalampos worked at “Papagiorgis” until he was about twenty years old and learned the basics of pastry making. According to the special terminology—or dialect—used among apprentice pastry chefs, he made sure to “steal” the ideas and secrets of the chefs by secretly watching them and whistling innocently whenever they put the final

touches on a dessert—that is, when they finished it or added the details.

(Here I note that special terminology or dialect means words used by a specific group; in this case, by apprentice pastry chefs.)

In Athens

When he was twenty years old, the whole family moved to Athens.

There, it was easy for him to find work because he already had experience.

At that time, he was hired by the famous pastry shop of the era, “Delice” in Kolonaki, which was known for making semifreddo ice cream.

At that time there were no ice-cream machines, and pastry chefs made this kind of ice cream by beating salt with ice, a process that, according to the laws of physics, lowered the temperature to minus eight degrees Celsius.

(“Semifreddo” is an Italian word that means half-frozen. It is a type of ice cream that evolved into a frozen dessert.)

And so Charalampos learned this technique.

The Appearance of Fifi and Fofi

One day, while he was working on such an order, he suddenly saw them looking at him carefully from one spot.

They were two insects that looked like cockroaches. One was green and the other was blue, and they were very beautiful.

They appeared beside him on the floor and looked at him like human beings.

Charalampos stopped in surprise. He went to chase them away, but they disappeared at once, running under a cupboard.

From that moment on, they appeared at important moments in his life. Whenever this happened, he understood that something important was about to take place. They were his good-luck charm.

He named the green one Fifi and the blue one Fofi.

At “Maxim”, “King George”, and “Grande Bretagne”

Charalampos’s reputation spread among pastry chefs, and so his name was heard at the famous “Maxim” pastry shop in Kolonaki, where they were looking for a craftsman who specialized in semifreddo ice cream.

Two days after he had seen Fifi and Fofi, the owner of Maxim went to Delice, found Charalampos, and offered him a position at Maxim with double the salary he was receiving at Delice.

Charalampos accepted, and the very next day he was there.

He stayed there until the early years of the German occupation, when Maxim was under Italian ownership. At that time, he received another offer and moved to the King George Hotel.

Around 1946, while Charalampos was making a syrupy dessert for a large group order, he suddenly saw them again, looking at him carefully from one spot.

(Here I tell you that a syrupy dessert is a sweet that has been covered or soaked with syrup.)

Fifi and Fofi looked proud and elegant.

Then he put some sugar on a little plate and carefully placed it near them.

They understood that he would not harm them and began to eat the sugar from the plate.

The next day, the head chef of the Grande Bretagne Hotel came and offered him the position of head pastry chef at the Grande Bretagne.

Charalampos said that it was a great honor for him and accepted gladly.

He stayed at the Grande Bretagne until 1950.

See more in the Book