

Despite her expertise in ramen, Rhea had set her sights on something a little out of her comfort zone—to excel in the annual Burrowgatory Bake Off!

The thought of winning a baking competition was exciting to her, and the challenge of creating a mouthwatering dessert—something far different from her savory ramen dishes—excited her. She had heard about the Bake Off entrants who often used secret ingredients to make their dishes stand out amongst the others, and she was determined to find that special element for her own recipe.

“Hm... a classic is good, right?”

With her heart set on a classic pumpkin pie, she knew it had to be nothing short of perfection.

-

Rhea called up Quince, who was known for her exquisite baking skills. She had won various competitions over the years. She owned a shop called "Pedigree Pets," which was a... posher place to adopt imps, especially when compared to the Imporium. Rhea often turned to Quince for advice and inspiration when it came to her baking adventures, since she knew far more than Rhea, who only knew about ramen!

One afternoon, Rhea decided to pay Quince a visit to discuss her plans for the Bake Off. As she entered Pedigree Pets, she was greeted by the mesmerizing scent of sweets and the playful chittering of imps.

Quince greeted Rhea with her same old toothy grin.

"A surprise just for me?" Quince asked.

Rhea smiled back. "Well... I called you up, but you didn't answer! The shop's on lunch, so I thought I would stop by."

Rhea explained her dream of participating in the Bake Off and the pumpkin pie she wanted to create.

"I want to make the most *perfect* pumpkin pie, one that will wow the judges and leave everyone craving more. But I'm not sure how to make it... special? I've heard some entrants use secret ingredients. Do you have any advice, Quince?"

Rhea's eyes all but sparkled.

Quince chuckled, sauntering over before she placed a hand on Rhea's cheek, rubbing her thumb across the soft skin there. Thoughtfully, she said, "Well, I think the key to creating an *extraordinary* pie is to use the highest quality ingredients and, of course, a little bit of love." With a mischievous grin, she leaned in and planted a soft kiss on Rhea's cheek.

Rhea giggled at the playful gesture, her heart racing as she playfully swatted at Quince. "Oh, you! I'm serious. We are *not* getting distracted this time," Rhea insisted. "But... hm, high-quality ingredients and love, huh? That sounds like a winning combination. But, Quince, how can you afford such top-notch ingredients?"

Quince laughed confidently.

"Pedigree Pets is a successful shop, right? And I've saved enough to indulge a little."

With Quince's advice and newfound determination, Rhea and Quince decided to join forces for the Bake Off, each bringing their unique skills and charm to the table. They chose to create a classic pumpkin pie, as per Rhea's request, a dessert that would showcase Rhea's love for the art of cooking and Quince's flair for making anything extraordinary.

As they embarked on their culinary adventure, the kitchen of Pedigree Pets was filled with laughter and playful banter. Rhea's cheeks were flushed from Quince's playful compliments and gentle touches, and she couldn't help but flirt back—she could never help herself when it came to Quince! Their chemistry was growing stronger as they mixed and measured ingredients with shared laughter and occasional stolen kisses.

"Ah... no more kisses," Rhea mumbled, pulling away from Quince. Quince caught Rhea's waist with her large hand, and Rhea looked back at her with

narrowed eyes and a pout on her lips. “Or else this will become quite the sinful pie...”

“But isn’t the sin the name of the game in Burrowgatory?”

“Ah—I guess, but still...!”

With their combined efforts, Rhea and Quince created the perfect pumpkin pie filling, made from the sweetest pumpkin, warm spices, and the freshest cream. Their pie crust was a buttery masterpiece that melted in the mouth. Rhea carefully brushed the top with a hint of sugar to create a perfectly golden-brown finish.

Finally, as the timer chimed, they removed the pie from the oven. It was a work of art, a perfect embodiment of their passion and love for cooking. They let it cool as they prepared two slices for themselves, along with a dollop of freshly whipped cream.

“Ooh, I feel a bit guilty having some...” Rhea said, sliding her slice on to a plate. “It’s so perfect!”

“Don’t feel bad,” Quince said. “We gotta taste it, or else how are we gonna in good faith serve it to everyone at the Bake Off?”

“I guess that’s true.”

Sitting at a small table Quince had in her kitchen, Rhea and Quince savored the moment together. They had put their hearts into this pie, and now it was time to enjoy the fruit of their labor. As they took their first bites, the flavors exploded in their mouths – the sweet, spiced pumpkin filling, the buttery, flaky crust, and the cloud-like whipped cream.

Their eyes met, and they exchanged knowing smiles.

As the last crumb disappeared, Rhea and Quince leaned in for a delicious kiss, sealing their shared culinary adventure with a promise of more to come. With their hearts full of love and their stomachs full of pie, they knew that the Bake Off would be a breeze.