

EVERYTHING WRONG WITH JALAPEÑO COOKIE'S DESIGN COMING FROM A CHARACTER DESIGNER

DISCLAIMER!!!!: This essay is merely done for fun, it's fine if you like the design and don't agree with what I have to say, this is just my humble opinion as a pursuing character designer who frequently analyzes designs from different pieces of media as well as designing my own characters. Please be kind in your discussions 💔. This isn't an attack on Devsisters, the Oven Games team or the designers either. Also, English is not my first language, so if anything is weirdly worded, it's probably for that reason.

CHARACTER DESIGN

Character design is an essential aspect in every piece of media we consume. Videogames, movies, shows, all of these go through the process of concept art, which includes designing the architecture, laws, weapons, rules of the world, and most importantly, the characters. The titular characters are everything we will see for the duration of the piece of media, therefore, they need to have an appealing design that suits their setting, what they represent and the sight of the viewer. If a character's appearance is unappealing, it can disconnect the viewer or player from the environment, and their enjoyment will diminish. For this essay, I will be going through the essentials of character designs (at least from my perspective as someone who is working and studying to become an industry character designer) and how the character I will be talking about fails at most, if not all of them.



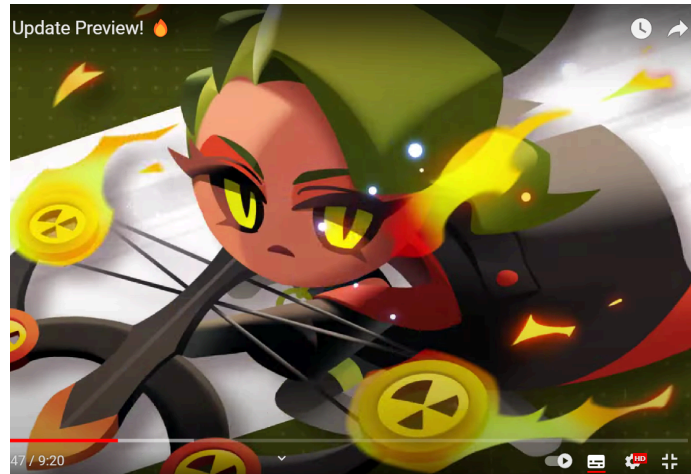
WHO IS JALAPEÑO COOKIE?

This is Jalapeño Cookie, a playable character released in the game *Cookie Run: Tower of Adventures*. According to her description in the preview of her update, she's a Fighter-type Cookie who attacks with her crossbow. In the preview, it's told that in the story, Jalapeño Cookie is on the search for a "Magma Stone" that contains the powers of fire, seemingly trying to find the way to the fire Guardian Cookie, just like Gingerbrave's team is trying to accomplish. In exchange for the Magma Stone, Jalapeño Cookie and her acquaintance, Basil Pesto Cookie, would help Gingerbrave's team find the clues to the Guardian Cookies.

APPEARANCE

Jalapeño Cookie's appearance seems to feature a variety of different characteristics, some more associated with her role, job and ingredient (put a pin in the ingredient aspect, as it's an essential character design aspect in the case of *Cookie Run* characters) that in a way or another increases or decreases the potential of her designs. Jalapeño Cookie is a reddish tan-doughed Cookie, with green eyes and black eyelashes, red eyeshadow, and defined green eyebrows. She also appears to be wearing lipstick, as its shape assimilates to that of cartoonish human lips, which differs from the usual mouths in *Cookie Run* characters. Her hair is dark green with a lighter green gradient, her hairstyle appears to have a mix of different hairstyles, with her right side appearing to have cornrows, a double ponytail and a side part for the left side of her head. She appears to be wearing a black sleeveless crop top, lime green chains hanging from her neck, a big open red and black jacket that is down to her exposed shoulders, black gloves, black half-legging-half short pants, a lime green belt

with a red buckle, a lime green strap on her right leg and knee high ambiguous footwear on her left leg. Her weapon appears to be a big black crossbow mixed with the technology of a modern sniper gun, it has a lime green handle end, and each corner of the limbs has red and lime green wheel-like accessories that resemble sliced jalapeños.



Initially, her design looked very different in her reveal teaser trailer. Her color palette had a drier, reddish brown aspect, that resembled her more to a dried jalapeño than a raw jalapeño. Her features were also strange, her body was slimmer and longer resembling that of a human woman, and her expression painted a much different picture about her personality than her official personality really was as shown in the update preview.

CHARACTER DESIGN IN COOKIE RUN

Now, to dive into her design. The most important aspect in Cookie Run character designs is the relevance of their ingredients. Let's use some examples as what makes a Cookie Run character design good taking their profession, historical or environmental setting and personality into consideration (In my, Sam Tigerfeathers, personal opinion and mine alone). We will also take color palette, a major flaw of Jalapeño Cookie's design into consideration, however, only for the examples of a bad or failed character design. You can skip this part if you'd like to go straight ahead to Jalapeño Cookie's design analysis, however the tangent

I'm about to go through properly dictates the standard for the critique, so keep reading if you'd like more context.

For this section in particular, I will avoid using character designs that were released earlier than 2023, as older character designs are outdated and don't fit the designing team's current standards.

GOOD CHARACTER DESIGN



In the case of Peach Blossom Cookie, we immediately know what he is supposed to be. His soft pink pastel colors resemble that of a Chinese peach tree. His "bun" hair looks exactly like a peach. From his gentle look, we can tell that he means well, we immediately know his personality thanks to how his emotion is portrayed, however we can still feel uncertainty from his left eye, which is covered by flowers, which symbolize purity, giving it a sort of mysterious feeling. From his outfit we can tell he's based on Chinese culture, as he's wearing a simplified version of a hanfu, so, without knowing about his setting being the Ivory Pagoda, we can tell he's surrounded by a Chinese-inspired setting. At first glance, we are able to figure out the ingredient of the character thanks to

the big peach behind his head which catches the eye of the viewer almost instantly, making it a good design for the standards of Cookie Run character design.



In the case of Potato Cookie, which is personally my favorite character design out of all characters in the franchise. When we look at him at first glance, without acknowledging his ingredient, we see that he's a farmer thanks to his attire and messy look. His stance is also confident and almost has a cocky, but well-meaning smile, which assimilates to the happy farmer stereotype that we can also see with, for example, Applejack from My Little Pony. His dough color looks a similar color to real potatoes, which can also fit his environment as the tan color symbolizes spending lots of time in the sun outside, working at a

farm. We can also see him holding a Potato Pig, which is a symbol of harvesting. We can immediately tell he's supposed to resemble a potato, thanks also to the shape language, his big, almost round body type fits the shape of a real potato as well as his strength from working at a farm, which requires physical abilities. Potato Cookie is an incredible example of a good Cookie Run design, as his farmer role fits the setting of real potatoes without him having a straight up potato (if we exclude the Potato Pig) as an accessory in his design.

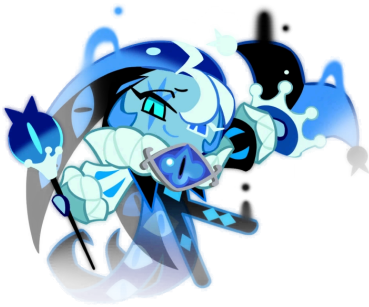


In the case of Cream Soda Cookie, her simple design resembles that of a Japanese cream soda float. We can also tell her profession and cultural inspiration from her outfit. She has a sailor inspired uniform (based on Japanese school uniforms), therefore we can assume that she's a schoolgirl. Her sword is creatively shaped like a Korean Binggrae Power Cap soda ice cream. Her

white hat resembles the floating ice cream which matches her flowy straight blue hair made of soda, which can let us know what she's made out of (additionally thanks to the fizzy bubbles). We can tell she's water-themed thanks to the abundance of blues in her palette, which make for a more delicate symbol to a tough job like swordsmanship, and the reds on the cherry (a finishing touch on real Japanese cream sodas) make for a great color balance, making it a good Cookie Run design.

BAD CHARACTER DESIGN

(If you like these designs that's fine, again, this is my opinion and criteria X_X):



SHADOW MILK COOKIE

In the case of Shadow Milk Cookie, which I find a bad design, we can immediately assume what he is supposed to be thanks to his outfit rather than his ingredient, which is a major flaw with his design. To make it short, there's nothing about him that screams "milk", compared to the other examples I gave earlier. Even in-game, his character doesn't seem to apply any aspect related to milk to his abilities. I would understand excluding it to avoid any unsavory hidden meanings, however, that can be

disproven by the existence of another milk-themed Cookie, Milk Cookie! Despite this Cookie being created in 2019, his design properly expresses his ingredient (disregarding the alleged religious symbolism). His palette, despite being simple, it's straightforward and resembles the color of his ingredient. His puffy, curly hair resembles milk foam, the patterns on his shield and hat resembles dripping milk (which is something we can also see in Shadow Milk Cookie's design, however, for his design, this pattern is used to resemble harlequin accessories rather than symbolizing his ingredient). His cheery face gives a soft, welcoming personality, similar to the soft flavor or milk.



Disregarding Shadow Milk Cookie's story (remember, this design is observed from a surface level, without acknowledging his lore), we can assume he's mischievous from his color palette and expression: slanted pupils, trickster attire, dark (frequently associated with evil) colors. The issue is the absence of his ingredient. We can consider the floating, dripping parts of himself, but that is more familiar to a slimy monster than a milk creature. His shape language is inconsistent, the curvy soft shapes of the dripping dots collide to the sharp corners of his hair, cape, staff, etc, and the mix of sharp and smooth in his Soul Jam is not properly balanced out in the rest of his design. His frilly shirt is almost out of place for a harlequin costume as the detail collides with the simplicity of his white hair. You can have no clue about what ingredient he represents, or how the "shadow" aspect even correlates with the concept of milk. His color palette is also very saturated, with strong, vibrant colors that oppose the gentler, softer colors associated with milk. The indigo is especially clashing with the blues, mostly with his right eye. We may find more presence of his ingredient in his good version of himself, however, I am talking about Shadow Milk, not [Blueberry Milk]. His design makes me say "WHERE SHOULD MY EYES BE LOOKING AT" when looking at him.

Now this could also apply to Mystic Flour Cookie (and to be fair, the rest of the Beasts as well), but Mystic Flour's lore related to the pale ailment references the use of flour, which makes her, dare I say weak color palette, fit her role, as well as her historical inspiration

being a Buddha, which makes her work as a design. But I did mention that lore doesn't apply to what makes these designs good.



CRÈME BRÛLÉE COOKIE

In the case of Crème Brûlée Cookie, when most Cookie Run designs have something going on that could let us know about the character, Crème Brûlée Cookie has nothing going on. Cookie Run designs tend to have some contextual clues that work as a creative decision and enhance the appeal of their characters, usually in things like their hair. Their hair usually gives the shape of their ingredient, which is something Crème Brûlée Cookie has, but it was not nailed properly. His hair is meant to resemble a toasted crêpe brûlée surface, however it assimilates more to a flan than a crêpe brûlée. His color palette is dull and desaturated, when real crêpe brûlée has a strong, vibrant outside and a pastel soft inside, but never desaturated. His dough color sticks out like a sore thumb, an almost grayish, ghostly tone for such a lively, sweet dessert. His hairstyle is messy and sharp, meant to represent a layered style, probably to fit the shape of a crêpe brûlée jar, but was not executed properly. His attire lets us know that he means fancy business, that's a plus. But the white color makes for unpleasant color balance, which could be improved if the shirt and jacket/pants switches color, to resemble the white jar surrounding the crêpe brûlée. As for his dirt-ridden pantshoes, I wouldn't know what to tell you, there's no salvaging.



POND DINO COOKIE

In the case of Pond Dino Cookie, the biggest injustice made to them about their design would be their name. The localized name was switched from "Forget-me-not Dino Cookie" to "Pond Dino Cookie", giving the player a different view as to how their design doesn't work in relation to their ingredient. Compared to Crème Brûlée Cookie and Shadow Milk Cookie, their ingredients aren't made clear from their name. But, even if we used the reference from the "Forget-me-not Dino" name, their design is ineffective to live up to the name. As an upside, we do have a forget-me-not flower in their design, the shape of the flower is soft and smooth, which clashes with the sharp ends of their hair swoops, pupils, lashes and limbs. The unnecessary extra color like purple feels out of place. Their proportions are unusual for a baby Cookie, which would be unique, but the "dino" anatomy is not nailed gracefully, making the half cookie-half animal balance feel lazy. The colors are also way too vibrant for their concept, as ponds and FMN flowers are almost pastel, which makes it an eyesore of a standout compared to their environment.

Keep in mind that these factors don't have to apply to every single character, as it greatly depends on the conditions in which these characters were designed. For example, this doesn't apply to NPCs. And it also shouldn't matter if it doesn't directly have features that reference their ingredient, as long as it has a subtle accessory that helps you deduce what the character represents without having to look at their name, it can work as a Cookie Run design. This also mostly doesn't apply to character designs from other pieces of media. Make sure to form your own opinions under your own criterias. My intention is not to make these critiques as an objective thing.



SUPERFICIAL DESIGN CRITIQUE

Now that we have a criteria for what makes a Cookie Run character good and bad, let's analyze Jalapeño Cookie's design. Keep in mind that, since the prior character analysis were examples, I'll be pickier with the different characteristics for Jalapeño Cookie, as she's the topic of this essay.

THE UPSIDE

For starters, we have an upside to the design, being her hair, but that doesn't save it from its flaws.

Her side swoop resembles a real jalapeño, with the curly stylization being a good creative decision. After asking my friends about it, they said the hair would definitely let us know she's pepper themed, however, they also mentioned that thanks to the strong lime green colors, she seems to be lime themed, "like a Taki". However, the shapes of her hair don't match anything else from her design, but that is something I will talk about in the in-depth section of the design analysis.

EXPRESSION AND PERSONALITY

Her personality is made ambiguous from the several previews we have of her. Her smug face and extravagant makeup makes us think she's up to no good, but her stoic, blank expressions we see in her splash art makes us think she's serious about her journey, which confuses us about what kind of person she truly is. In the games, splash art gives us a first glance about everything we need to know about how the characters will act simply from the expressions they show without the need of looking into their stories. Examples:



Crimson Coral Cookie: Serious and stoic expression, puffed up chest, submissive animal companion: strong soldier on her way to battle.



Oyster Cookie: Older, sophisticated look. Rich and elegant, confident stance. She means business. Everything she has to say, people will hear.



Rebel Cookie: Vigorous, confident grin, athletic pose ready to strike. He knows he has the abilities to fulfill his motivation.



Star Coral Cookie: Curious, uncertain look. Her mellow pose signifies a yearn for adventure and the unknown, her light shines to something she sees that she doesn't know about.



Olive Cookie: Curious look, fixing her glasses to take a proper look at what she's seeing. Her forward steps symbolize confidence for



adventure. Her gadgetry lets us know she's an explorer.

Royal Margarine Cookie: Smug, cocky grin, pretentious expression. Taking care of his appearance. Esteemed status. Probably egocentric.



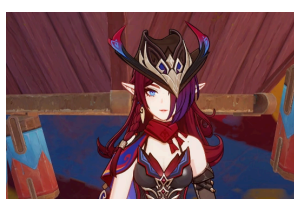
As we can see from the splash screen and her gacha splash art, both of these sprites have serious expressions, maybe we can assume that something goes on behind her mind, but if her in-game personality is full of cocky grins, we can't quite understand what are her motivations. Her splash art also shows us almost nothing about her design, with most of her art being covered by her jacket, which could symbolize mystery, but at the same time, splash arts help us see a full body of the character, it's not supposed to hide it. I will talk more about her story later on, but as of writing this, I have managed to get a hold of her story cutscenes, however I am confident that my point of her personality being inconsistent when we look at her official art still stands even after this knowledge.



INCONVENIENT OUTFIT

Her outfit tells us nothing about her. After external feedback (my friends), they've told me she looks like a "stripper" (WHICH I DON'T AGREE WITH. AGAIN, ASKED THIS TO FRIENDS WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE GAME). But, this can somehow prove to us that this superficial aspect of her design doesn't help us know what she does. Her outfit for her established job (which we found out is bounty hunting) is improper for her. Her body is exposed to potential harm, the most important parts like her stomach, shoulders and legs are out for the world to see. Her vibrant dough color stands out from the black attire, which makes her an easy target for people to attack. The belt and strap are also a standout,

being even more vibrant than her dough color, similar to the color of those safety jackets people use on roads to make their presence known. A strong color amidst a dark environment, for example, can get her caught in case of an altercation. The jacket is also unconventional, as it gives no protection to her body. She lacks any sort of strong part to her outfit that could protect her from harm, as she seems to search for something many have sought after. Overall, it's an inconvenient outfit. Her fit was lazily designed and no thought seemed to be put into how this would affect her actions in the story of the game.



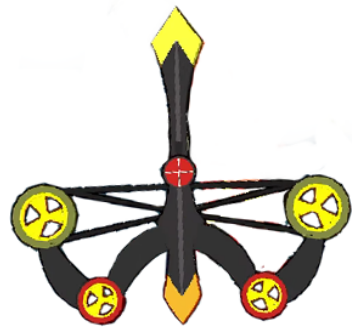
It almost resembles characters like Chasca or Mavuika from Genshin Impact. As someone who only knows the character's names and their cultural inspiration and nothing about their story and lore significance, there is nothing I can assume from either of the two's designs that helps me know what they do. In fact, Chasca, who I find most similarity with Jalapeño Cookie, at least in terms of outfit, looks more like a sexualized Spanish Conquistador (with aspects such as her Euro-inspired hat and her color palette) than she does an Incan goddess. Her color palette that mostly features red, blue and black doesn't help me associate her with Incan culture, as ancient Incas often portrayed her expy counterpart as a gold jewelry-ridden woman, symbolizing her role as the Goddess of light.

UNCREATIVE WEAPON

A plus about her design, at least related to her outfit, would be her crossbow. But since her outfit is a flaw, so is her weapon. Her weapon is made to resemble sliced jalapeños, but that's all there is to it. The shape of the crossbow is uncreative.



Crossbows in the Cookie Run franchise, like Pastry Cookie's, and other weapons could take so many creative routes that can give hints about the environment in which the character is coming from. It seems the designers skipped on incredible potential for



a pepper-themed weapon, like Peperoncino Cookie's greatsword or Chili

Pepper Cookie's knives. The fully black base makes it boring and bland, the standouts would be the wheels, but the shapes are out of place with the rest of the design. Apart from the chains on her neck, there's nothing "circular" about her that could make the use of circles consistent, let alone in the circle-lacking crossbow. The yellows are an eyesore compared to the blacks, the tips are way too strong to give it a good contrast and balance. The crossbow's technology seems ambiguous. Assuming that she comes from a place similar to that of the Dragon's Valley, where technology is not advanced, it's strange for her to have such an advanced weapon. A more magical or fantasy touch could've given the weapon a lot more charm, but a dim, bland use of technology similar to that of real life sniper guns feel boring, and, again, out of place. I have noticed these advanced technological sniper weapons amongst NPCs in Tower of Adventures, however, I have mentioned this critique will not apply to non-playable characters, as they're not in topic with this essay.

IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE

Now I will have to go a lot more in-depth, really nitpicking her design, so I can properly express my personal issue with her. We will tackle these aspects:

- **SHAPE LANGUAGE:** how shapes in the design communicate certain aspects about the character, such as their story, personality and background. In this section we will talk about: repetition of shapes, silhouette, shape symbolism and stance.
- **COLOR PALETTE:** how the set of colors in the design work or don't work depending on what she's meant to represent. In this section we will talk about: complementary colors and color symbolism.
- **COLOR BALANCE:** how the color palette is adjusted and properly distributed through the design to appease to the visual attractiveness of it and create a sort of harmony. In this section, we will talk about: palette harmony, color contrast and visual appeal.

*The upcoming section of this analysis was developed with the reference of the Walt Disney Family Museum Art and Innovation manual.



SHAPE LANGUAGE

Shape language can be used to show you things about a character, how they act, how their sense of self is, without having to see them commit any actions or even speak at all. Shapes can mean many different things and help enhance the character's personality subtly. In the case of Jalapeño Cookie, her composition features a variety of shapes that give us a look at how she acts, with the main shape being triangles.

REPETITION OF SHAPES

The repetition of shapes helps a design feel consistent and fluid, giving it a set-in-stone theme that the viewer can understand. Jalapeño Cookie's design features triangles of various shapes and sizes, however these are badly distributed across her design. The biggest, and only triangles in her body are on her hair. One big triangle-like shape resembling her hair swoop and two triangles on the back of her head, being her ponytails. Where I find issue with this use of shape repetition is in the scale of her hair and how the shapes don't match. Her ponytail is inconsistent, shorter and stiffer than the long, zigzaggy side swoop, making it a shape imbalance, as these shorter triangles shapes are not repeated anywhere else across her body. Speaking of her zigzaggy pattern, this pattern isn't repeated or alluded to anywhere else in her body either except for the teensy baby hair on the right side of her head. However, if I could be honest, I did not notice this baby hair until making the image you can see in this section, as it blended in with her design, making it almost feel out of place.

We also see squares and circles in her design. The circles of the chain on her neck match the smoothness of her crop top, but collide with the sharpness of the accessories that surround it, like the belt and strap, for example. In this case, we would have to exclude the circles in her weapon, as we're only looking at her body and not her accompanying gadgetry. The theme of chains isn't seen anywhere else across her body, which makes me wonder what the point of it was. As we will see in the story, the symbolism of the chains also don't correlate with her previous appearance or her story. It could be different if it were broken chains, like with Capsaicin Cookie, but the chain on her neck is close. Unless it's not a chain and I'm being silly.

The squares on the bottom work for what they have to be, a belt and leg accessory. However, I feel like, for her theme, they could've gone with a differently shaped belt, with how endless the possibilities with belt designing are, plus, if we added her weapon to the overall product, it would feel out of place, as there are no present square shapes anywhere in her weapons.

In short, the shapes are all over the place and badly distributed, and, in turn, make the design hard to look at in this aspect.

SILHOUETTE

The silhouette is one of the most important aspects in character design. According to the Walt Disney Family Museum: “When designing characters, artists often use a silhouette to test whether the character's basic design “reads” to the audience.”. This aspect works for a variety of characters in the Cookie Run franchise. When we look at some of these, we can figure out who they are, and if we don't know them, we can assume their profession or status just from the shapes in the silhouettes.



Returning to Jalapeño Cookie, in the case of her splash art, we can presume her profession. Her crossbow stands out and we can see a substance, presumably flames coming out of it. From the silhouette of the crossbow we can tell the character holding it is a sort of ranger. The issue with the splash art comes from Jalapeño Cookie herself. What stands out about her is her double ponytail, while we are unable to see any other features like her big side swoop, which is covered by the cape, which is actually covering most of her body. We

can't exactly tell what pose she has either. From the examples of the Cookies I laid above, the shapes surrounding them stand out. From the shapes, we can deduce the characters' personalities and roles. Twizzly Gummy Cookie's hair stands out, and the messy shape of the coils can let us assume that she's a crazy character. Prune Juice Cookie's big hat, yet smooth point and drippy substances around him, plus what we can figure out is a bottle, can let us infer that he practices magical things like alchemy. Frost Queen Cookie's plethora of sharp shapes around her can let us assume she's an imposing, possibly dangerous presence. Latte Cookie's pointy hat and big staff can let us assume she's a witch.



For this case, I've excluded her weapon, not to discredit her silhouette but to make it less cluttered, as her crossbow interrupts the shape of her face. The standout in Jalapeño Cookie's standard silhouette is her ponytail, however, the shape of it looks more like a bow than hair, which can bring a misconception about her design. She looks more like a schmancy fancy woman, her cape jacket looks more like a symbol of richness. According to external sources (my friends), her silhouette represents a cutesy character rather than a fighter. This could benefit her design in terms of her lore, however for this section, we are excluding her story and simply analyzing the character. We will talk about the importance of the lore in her design later on, and how it does less for her design than we realize. Her

silhouette fails as a factor of her design as it brings misconceptions to what she is supposed to be.

SHAPE SYMBOLISM

When you look at shapes, what is it you feel? When you look at a character with sharp edges, you feel threatened by them. The edges of the shapes symbolize imposing, a force to be reckoned with, what's sharp can hurt you, so you stay away from it. The smoothness of ovals and circles signify welcoming. A squishy, soft shape, its lack of edges proves it can't hurt you, you can approach it and feel a sense of comfort. This aspect in shapes not only symbolizes non-contextual aspects, but the shapes in a character design tell you a lot about the kind of person this character is. Let's look at some examples from Cookie Run characters.



Wildberry Cookie: square themed. Stiff, buff pose. Square shaped gauntlet, chest, armor and cape. An inflexible force, an obedient subject, a powerful knight.

Street Urchin Cookie: triangle themed. Spiky, hair, sharp eyelashes, jagged clothing. A sharp, threatening character, lonely and unpredictable.



Fried Jellyfish Cookie: circle themed. Circular hat, squishy hair, puffy dress and frilly accessories. A gentle, welcoming character, nothing about her can hurt you.

Returning to Jalapeño Cookie, her variety of shapes doesn't let us assume what kind of person she is. Like I said, the shapes in her composition are everywhere, though, we can infer from the triangles on her face that the shapes are sort of keeping you away from getting too close to her face, most likely to keep her identity unknown or to not let people know her true self, which is a good and smart design choice! However, this aspect has been interpreted after reading her story, so make of that what you will. As for the shape symbolism in her body, like I said with my example of Wildberry Cookie, the square shapes symbolize sturdiness and strength, but these shapes are situated in parts where these symbols aren't needed. It would be different if these were in places like her shoulders or chest, where sturdiness is needed for her own protection. The circles elements are out of place as these shapes represent softness and harmlessness, which go against the triangle symbolism, being contradictory, both in her character and her design. The complete use of sharp shapes could probably represent her personality a lot more, and concisely portrays her struggles. Sharpness conveys feelings of avoidance and reservation, this goes with her lore, therefore, to portray her character in a physical manner, it could've been better if she were completely triangle themed, like Street Urchin Cookie.



STANCE

There's not much to say regarding stance. It basically refers to the pose in which the character's default sprite is set, it works to show their personality. A stiff pose can signify stoicness, a flamboyant pose can signify confidence and a cowering pose can signify low self esteem or solitude.

Jalapeño Cookie's stance is relaxed and almost nonchalant. The way she holds her crossbow close to her can tell us that she has experience with it, however her gestures don't tell us enough about the way she is. Coming back to the use of portrayal of emotions, her switch in expressions in her stance animation show us two sides of her personality, not letting us know exactly how she's supposed to be. Her swaying stance shows us a dispassionate character, but right before it, we see a cocky and poised character. Which of the two exactly is it?

Despite posing and stancing being more essential in animation rather than still pieces, it's still determined that it "*shows that sometimes just a single pose can tell everything there is to know about a character and its situation.*", we don't quite get that from Jalapeño Cookie.

Moving on to the next fundamental: the color palette.

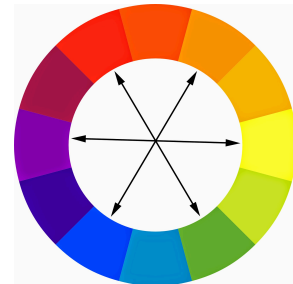


COLOR PALETTE

The color palette is a set of colors present in a character, a setting, etc, that serves as cohesion in an art piece. It can set the tone of the scene, show the character's personality through its symbolism and beautify the overall product. Jalapeño Cookie's color palette might be my biggest problem with her design, so let me explain why.

COMPLEMENTARY COLORS

Complementary colors are the colors found at opposite ends of the color wheel, the gimmick with these is that when combined, they can create a satisfying and attractive color palette that gives these touches that stand out when properly distributed, and give the overall product a good sense of contrast. Some examples of Cookie Run characters with complementary color palettes are:



We can see these designs are, for the most part, appealing to the eye, the colors complement each other effectively and show us aspects of their personality, either with the strength of the colors and how the opposite colors of their main theme complement the design.



Jalapeño Cookie's color palette is complementary, she has a mix of green and red, which are opposites in the color wheel. For the most outstanding feature, being her hair, the color is a desaturated mossy green, similar to a real jalapeño, which clashes with the strong vibrant colors that give the shiny part of her hair as well as her eyes, which, rather than being a lighter green, are lime. The reds are all relatively neutral, which causes a clash with the vibrance of the lime as there's no strong red to complement it. The grays and blacks give for a good contrast, which is a plus to her design. It correlates with her eyelashes and matches the vibe of sly bounty hunters. It's the factors of the vibrance of the lime that falters in her outfit colors.



COLOR SYMBOLISM

It's a basic fact in art that colors have meanings, positive or negative. Colors usually associated with bad things like blue and black can also convey positive feelings or emotions, it just comes down to how the color is being used.



The main color in Jalapeño Cookie's design is green, as it's the color associated with her ingredient (I know red jalapeños exist, but the most popular variation is the green one). The color green can symbolize multiple things, like envy, disgust, mischief, materialism, but also nature, growth, cleanliness and luck. The symbolism of the color green has been used in Cookie Run designs before, and all fit their respective stories and personalities. Matcha Cookie's green ingredient is used to represent greed and evil, perfectly translated in her stance, desaturated color palette and scary demeanor. Wind Archer's color scheme is vibrant and well contrasted, meant to represent the beauty of nature and the forest, his background. The flowy shapes show us he's a protector and also symbolizes the flowingness of wind. The use of green in Jalapeño Cookie's design is not given any meaning besides relating it to her ingredient. Even if this color represents growth, the green in her design is desaturated like a raw jalapeño, when maybe, to show her character development, her current design could be a more vibrant green to contrast her old design that we'll see later on, as well and contrast the strong lime colors without it looking like an eyesore.



The use of reds in her design are plenty, mostly seen in her strong dough color, eyeshadow and clothing. The use of red in her eyeshadow can be a smart design choice, as red symbolizes feelings such as anger and pride, potentially fitting of her character and complements the green of her hair, however, it can show a misconception about her personality. Red makeup in characters can represent eccentricity and sexuality, which are not what Jalapeño Cookie is. In her teaser animation, we saw her face full of makeup and got a completely incorrect interpretation about the type of person she was. People expected her to be evil, mischievous and naughty, which completely goes against her ideas in the story, and the straight face she poses in her official art. So in this case, this use of red is erroneous and out of character. Another problem with the use of colors is the intense use of red in her outfit that erases that complementation we see on her face. Red could symbolize things like danger and alertness, but in terms of her ingredients and background, it feels out of place.

Finally, we'll move on to the final fundamental: color balance.



COLOR BALANCE

To achieve an appealing color balance, there should be a dominant color in the design, especially if the colors in the palette are complementary. Small doses of a complementary color in an opposite dominant color looks good, giving equal amounts of complementary colors to a design is an eyesore as it makes it so your view is directed to several aspects of the composition, making it confusing.

PALETTE HARMONY

Jalapeño Cookie's design isn't green dominated nor red dominated. And with the presence of a saturated lime green, which is a subordinate color amongst the greens and reds, ends up overpowering both of these colors, creating an imbalance. There's no green in a space of red where green is needed and vice versa. Including the dough color which is a shade of red, it overpowers the green and erases the significance of the green of her hair, which is the most essential part of her, as it not only resembles her ingredient, but it represents her identity and personality. In short, the colors are everywhere, which is why it makes her design hard to look at.

COLOR CONTRAST

According to Colorado State University: "Color contrast is about how one color stands out from another color." It's an effective way of creating an appealing design with a color palette that depicts the meaning you're trying to express. Small specks of red in a green themed design makes for a spark of diversity. An equal mix of both, especially in the shades of green and red given, makes the design hard to look at and unappealing for the eye. The lime color sticks out like a sore thumb, as it's an incredibly different color from the desaturated greens and reds, just like her dough color as well. Again, this is a factor of color imbalance in her design.

HOW DOES HER DESIGN COMPARE TO OTHER PEPPER COOKIES?



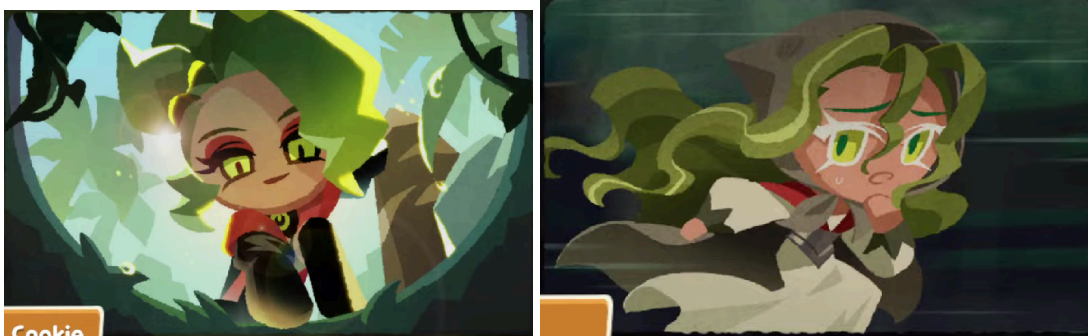
Jalapeño Cookie is unique in this regard, as she's the only pepper themed Cookie in the franchise who's dominant color isn't red or orange. But, we can see a pattern in these designs which prove the points I made regarding the fundamentals of color palette and color imbalance. All of these designs stick to vibrant and strong dominant colors, creating a harmony with the rest of the design. And the most important thing about them is their use of green. As green is a complementary color to red, the green in these characters isn't overly used. They're small touches in their accessories that not only resemble pepper stems, but

create an appealing diversity of colors. My personal favorite is Habanero Cookie, as his green eyes go with his little stem and hammer handle. A more subtle detail could be Chili Pepper Cookie's dagger handles and Crushed Pepper Cookie's hairband. They're small little details we can catch if we really look at them, but once we have the knowledge of the greens in their designs, it creates a palette harmony. With the exception of Habanero Cookie, none of the greens in these designs are strong. They're mossy and desaturated, so they're not an eyesore to look at, nor do they derail the viewer's sight from the important parts of their bodies (Habanero Cookie's green colors are an exception as his dominant color is orange, and the colors aren't complementary, therefore they don't cause an eyesore). This is good character design.

THE INFLUENCE OF HER STORY IN HER DESIGN

Jalapeño Cookie's character description reads as such:

"A cold stare, filled with a spicy flame! 🌶️ Jalapeño Cookie was baked with thickly cut jalapeño added to the mix, and the temperature at max! This has caused this Cookie's dough to exude a spicy aroma. Even though she is just a newcomer at the large Tortilla guild, an organization known to gather all kinds of information - 🌶️ Jalapeño Cookie already has multiple completed requests on her resume! With that huge crossbow and her hair tied up so it doesn't get in the way, it's clear that this Cookie is a skilled adventurer. However, hearing her slip up in a dignified manner of speaking every so often causes many to be suspicious of her true identity... But soon, the quiet flicker will turn into a roaring flame!"



After watching her story, we find out that she's the princess of a vague fallen Kingdom from who knows where, who escaped after her subjects turned on her and overthrew the King, her father. Unfortunately, we don't get much information or backstory from her, but we do get a glance at how she used to look like in the past. Her old appearance has some differences from her current design. Her eye color is different, her hair seems to have a light stripe she doesn't have in her current look and her eyelashes are a different color. She also seems to be looking for her father while she's in the Tortilla guild. It's not explained why she looks different, but it's implied that she did so to hide her identity. I don't know how exactly she changed her hair and eyes, or why she keeps her name even though she's a wanted princess.

Her story also mentioned that she tied her hair up so it wouldn't get in the way of her face, but then... Why would she keep her hair swoop that almost covers her left eye? It's a design choice meant to resemble a jalapeño, but, why mention it in the story?

Her personality is also made clear, she is a stoic fighter who has a clear motivation she wants to fulfill. She's no cocky, egocentric girlboss. She's a damaged character whose life was turned upside down. I assume the cocky grins in her design are made because she's confident of her abilities, but it wouldn't suit her personality. She's badass but not in a way in a dauntless, vain way, like the teaser trailer made us think with her swaying hips and exposed body. Maybe a Caitlyn Kiramman (Arcane version, not LOL) kind of demeanor could be more fitting of her. She's portrayed in her design to be competent and almost invincible, she's competent of course, but it's implied her abilities with ranged weapons has not been something she was familiar with all her life. She might've only been using it for a few years, or however long she's been in exile from her kingdom. Her reserved nature, as seen from her quotes, isn't properly expressed in her design, Her suggestive attire not only interrupts her abilities as a bounty hunter, but feels out of character, especially for someone who's hiding her identity.

ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS



I've concocted three designs. These are not Jalapeño Cookie redesigns. Instead, they're potential design ideas for a non-canon Jalapeño Cookie, utilizing the canon character's color palette.



Despite these designs being made before I wrote everything about the fundamentals, I subconsciously took them into consideration. What I changed most about these designs compared to the canon



Jalapeño Cookie is the use of the complementary colors. I decided to use green as a dominant color to stick to the gimmick of jalapeños. I used more desaturated colors to fit the environment in which the canon character surrounds herself in: a dingy, darker setting representing the role of bounty hunters. I decided to keep the lime colors, but make them lighter and more desaturated to give a good color balance when seen in a grayscale lens, so that nothing mixes in. I gave the three of them different personalities as well as recognizable silhouettes that can express how they act without even having to look at them. I applied a red color as the subordinate

color, and similar to the other pepper cookies, I gave them a smaller presence across the composition to make a good color balance and appealing design, at least in my opinion.

TL;DR/CONCLUSION

Jalapeño Cookie's character design is flawed. As a Cookie Run character, she fails to properly show her ingredient, her profession and the setting of which she comes from. Her color palette is unappealing and the complementary colors are badly distributed. The desaturated and vibrant colors cause an eyesore around her entire body and her default sprites don't manage to convey the kind of person she is. She is fundamentally flawed when taking into consideration what makes a character design good and appealing and her weapon does not fit her neither in terms of shape language and overall correlation with her character. Her design is uncreative and has tons of missed potential.

Do I have the same problems with Jalapeño Cookie with other characters, both in Cookie Run and other pieces of media? Yes, absolutely. Not every design will be incredible and not every design would be appealing to my eyes. Will I make this kind of essay with any other character again? Nope. Are you wrong for liking Jalapeño Cookie's design? Of course not! This essay is purely subjective and everyone is entitled to their own opinions. Am I just a dissatisfied fan who has a problem with everything Cookie Run does? Maybe, but like, let me live. :3

I don't think I have the motivation nor the time at this point to make a Jalapeño Cookie redesign. Disappointing, I know. But, if anyone who read through this entire thing (bless you, by the way, you're a saint lol) wants to take my advice and personal knowledge to not only redesign Jalapeño Cookie but to design your very own characters, I would be incredibly flattered. I really hope my tips can help you as an artist or a designer. Thanks for reading !!!