



Accio, merriment

Wizards apparate into Chico for magical themed-dinner

When I was 7 years old, I'd made my mind up: I was going to be a witch. I fantasized about the day my Hogwarts acceptance letter would arrive. My dad took me to midnight *Harry Potter* book releases as J.K. Rowling unveiled more of her magical world, and we always got two copies so we could devour them simultaneously.

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Fantasy parties
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It's no surprise, then, that when a co-worker told me that Chico Princess Parties, a local character-based entertainment company, was hosting a Hogwarts Dinner Theater event at Chico Catering Co. (on Sept. 20), I snatched up two tickets as quick as a seeker who'd just spotted the golden snitch. My boyfriend's daughter, Kenzie, had just finished the series and was the perfect first mate.

As we arrived at the restaurant (Chico Catering Co. doubles as

The Foodie Cafe), we were buzzing with excitement. Kenzie and I took turns pointing out our fellow housemates decked out in robes and other magical accoutrements (she's a Ravenclaw and I'm a Hufflepuff). As we checked in with the prefects, the enchanting theme from *The Sorcerer's Stone* film played. We were escorted to our table on the patio—passing a portrait of Hogwarts and the house banners—where we sat with two other giddy witches.

The night started with a round of butterbeer—I appreciated that the nonalcoholic butterscotch-flavored drink was slightly sweet and fizzy with a whimsical dollop of whipped cream on top. We made a toast with our newfound friends and then talked about all things Harry Potter, from the seminal books to fan-inspired videos and songs.

Harry Potter and Hermione Granger apparated shortly after, and explained that dark forces were at work and they were on a quest to find the three pieces

of the elder wand and destroy it (following the plot from the last *Deathly Hallows* film). But, of course, they were going to need our help: Kenzie and I whipped out our wands and practiced some spells with the group.

It was precious watching the kiddos' excitement throughout the night. They were thrilled any time Harry and Hermione reappeared to share their adventures and entertain, and the pair were dynamic and fun to watch. They visited each table throughout the night and encouraged friendly competition between the Hogwarts houses by asking *Harry Potter* trivia questions. Kenzie was elated when she earned her housemates points by correctly answering, "Who were the Marauders?" (answer: Harry's dad's Gryffindor crew), and received a nod of approval from Hermione.

As for our meal, it was delicious and creative. For our first course, we enjoyed a gillyweed salad (a spring mix garnished with blackberries and almonds) and bread. Dinner was a British pastie (with a choice of chicken or beef) that was excellent—the crust was flaky and buttery but not greasy, and the beef was juicy and flavorful.

It was a good thing we purchased tickets weeks in advance, as the event sold out quickly. Chico Princess Parties already has more themed dinners with Chico Catering Co. on the horizon, including an already sold-out Hogwarts night (Oct. 19) and The Grinch Takes Over Who-Ville, a holiday buffet breakfast on Dec. 1.

The only downside of our evening: As soon as we got our dessert (which included a scrumptious "Platform 9 3/4" cookie), we felt we had to either wolf it down or take it to go. Those attending the adult session after ours had lined up, and the characters ushered us along. But Harry and Hermione stuck around to take pictures, and we were reminded not to hop on our broomsticks if we'd had too much butterbeer, getting one last chuckle in before departing. I'd call it a fun-filled *Harry Potter*-themed night and a much-needed magical infusion for this city of Muggles. □

Little wizards listen to Hermione tell "The Tale of the Three Brothers."



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