

## Pepero Day 11/11 my kids are #1!

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For the first time in my life, I'm traveling and living alone. I'm miles and miles away from home; on a bigger scale, I'm all the way on the opposite side of the planet. That's a distance more than what I can count with my fingers and toes. Moreover, I'm in a strange land that I've only viewed through the media. Here, the signs are no longer legible, streets are no longer recognizable, and people are no longer familiar. It's quite frightening at first, but now having been here for 3 months, I find myself more and more situated as the days pass. This is all thanks to my wonderful students, who I address as my kids. I am no longer frightened because they brighten up my days more than a sun could ever do. One of my most memorable days at school is Pepero day.

What is Pepero day? Pepero are scrumptious cookie sticks dipped in chocolate; for you nut lovers out there, some are covered with peanuts and almonds. November 11th marks the celebration of its existence because 11/11 looks like the cookie sticks. Stores stock up on heart decorated boxes of Pepero. It feels like Valentine's Day back at home. It's a day where people of all ages exchange and give out boxes of Pepero to show their love to others. Being a new teacher, I really didn't expect much of this day. I planned to sit back and watch as the students give Pepero to their favorite teachers. To my surprise, my kids, even the naughty ones, came up to me one by one handing me Pepero. At one point, every time I had my head tilted down to read, a Pepero stick appeared in front of my face, and I heard a sweet little voice say, "For you teacher." I was so overly joyful that I could not help but smile all day long. At the end of the day, Pepero of all sizes filled my backpack. The day could not have ended any better. For me, Pepero day did not exactly end on that day. When I went to my main school the next day, another surprise hid under my desk. More Pepero! My kids are truly #1; they make a strange place feel warm, loving, and welcoming just like home.

