

Bread, Body, Spirit: Finding the Sacred in Food

Alice Peck

Alice Peck, Editor

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After the grueling work of hunting and gathering, small groups of humans sat together around a roaring fire. They shared food and stories, developing unity and group spirit. Food was survival and community, and the people knew where the food came from and the effort it took to get it home. Today, in the world of vending machines, instant pudding, and microwave meals, things often aren't as clear.

Peck, whose other anthology, *Next to Godliness: Finding the Sacred in Housekeeping*, has gathered articles, poems, and essays from publications throughout the world that center on how people honor the act of growing, preparing, eating, or abstaining from food. Memoirist and food writer Betty Fussell describes battling a live eel that has a Rasputinlike will to live. Essayist Alison Luterman considers how "every strawberry she had ever eaten had been picked by calloused human hands." Islamic studies professor, Omid Safi, reminisces about the gooey, sweet, date omelets his mother rose early to cook on Ramadan mornings to fortify the family before the day-long fast.

Each section of the book is a meditation focused on the different facets of gardening, feasting, fasting, serving, cooking, eating, composting, and being grateful. Whether people are enjoying a Passover Seder or breaking the Ramadan fast or receiving the symbolic body and blood of Christ, food can be much more than simple fuel. This thoughtful book keeps the Buddhists' chant "Seventy-two labors brought us this food; we should know how it comes" alive in the pages.

DEIRDRE SINNOTT (March / April 2009)

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