

Creating a Sacred Space for Food, Mind, and Body



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Throughout human history, food has been perceived as sacred. The word sacred, used within the context of mindful eating, is not a religious term. Instead it refers to our spiritual connection with life and earth.

When food and eating are seen as something sacred, it is a way to express our respect and gratitude for what has been offered. All food is sacred in the sense that the life of a plant or animal has been sacrificed to feed another living being. Farmers have spent many hours of hard labor on their fields. The chef or the parent in the kitchen has made all this effort to nourish body, mind, and heart with balanced foods and the joy of eating.

If what has been given to us is no longer taken for granted, then eating becomes a spiritual practice. When we fully wake up with undivided attention, we clearly see that everything in our universe is part of this unseen and interconnected web. When we perceive the suffering that is caused by our unwholesome eating habits, then compassion naturally arises. “The wonderful thing about food is you get three votes a day,” says Michael Pollan. “And every one of them has the potential to change the world.”

Here are some suggestions to incorporate into your mindful eating practice that cultivate reverence in your relationship with food:

- Reconnect with silence, inside and outside of us. In this deep stillness, there is space and a lightness of being.



It is only when we pause mindfully that new and more wholesome ways of relating to food and ourselves become possible.

- Know the history of the ingredients on your plate by tracing them back to their origins (for example, meet and talk with farmers, winemakers, or cheese producers).
- Look into the future and see clearly how this food will be soon part of your body’s cells or other living beings, such as birds, worms, and other microorganisms.
- Be aware of the joy of giving and receiving. Feel deep appreciation for all the efforts people and all living organisms have made in order to nourish us.
- Wake up with all your senses to the natural elements, such as water, soil, sunshine, and fresh air, that are omnipresent in food, our bodies, and the environment. Take a moment of contemplation and ponder the

mystery of growth and life.

- Set a wholesome intention before eating, when compassion, joy, wisdom, trust, and mindful awareness are kindly invited.
- Consciously honor the sacrament of eating together by giving thanks for the delight of food and the presence of others.
- Practice detachment and equanimity by letting go of the “shoulds’ and “shouldn’ts.”

Isn’t it the orientation of our heart—not how much or even what we eat—that most matters?

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