



Week 3: Food Discovery

It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honorable to search out matters that are too deep. (Proverbs 25:27)

An Invitation to a Culinary Adventure

“Let’s eat and get out of here as quickly as we can,” I whispered to Leif as we unbuckled our seat belts.

My droopy-eyed husband and I were soul-tired from a long, busy season of work, but had previously committed to dinner at a new acquaintance’s home. As we pulled into the driveway, I was second-guessing that decision.

Dread grew with each step along the cobblestone path, but there was no backing out now. Leif stopped short at the door and looked at me as if to say, “Go on in, dear. You got us into this.” My best hope was to get the evening over with, so I could return to bed and my pajamas. I gripped the door knocker, counted to three, and forcibly transformed my grimace into what I hoped was a believable grin.

The door swung open, and Matthew and Ashley enveloped us in hugs as if we were prodigal children returning home. *Whoosh*—the air around us rearranged, and with it, our attitudes.

Hospitality has a hidden power that is difficult to explain but even harder to deny. You can wake up cranky and sore, but a mere whiff of Mom’s holiday sticky buns can bring your shoulders down from around your ear lobes. Or you find yourself drowning in loneliness and, just as tears well in your eyes, the phone rings and a new friend invites you over for a hot beverage and a bowl of fresh berries. One moment the world could burn to dust for all you care, and in a blink, it is sacred ground.

As the German author and poet Christian Morgenstern writes, “Home is not the building you live in; home is wherever you are understood.”

Leif and I found home that night—against our wills, no less. These many years later, I still can’t explain how it happened. Maybe it was the soothing flicker of candlelight or the broken-in couch that swallowed us whole, but nevertheless, our hearts stilled, and time became irrelevant.

Our more-than-capable host, Matthew, revealed himself as an avid foodie attuned to the finer points of knife-work techniques, the origin of rare ingredients, and the latest culinary breakthroughs. He served us wave upon wave of hors d’oeuvres—jalapeño-stuffed olives, salted pistachios, a charcuterie board of savory meats and exotic cheeses. Each bite tasted better than the last.

An hour after we arrived, Matthew pulled his *pièce de résistance* from the oven—a special-order roast from a local butcher slow-cooked for thirty-six hours. My mouth watered so much I struggled not to slobber on myself, but he informed us the meat needed to rest before we could enjoy. In the meantime, he served us an arugula salad with orange slices and homemade citrus

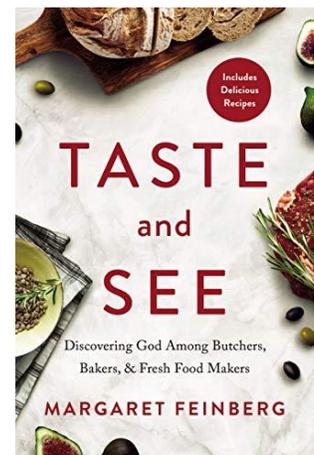
dressing. The meat arrived alongside a fresh Kalamata olive loaf and flash-fried broccoli sprinkled with lemon shavings.

Yep, Leif and I were definitely prodigal children. Every meal prior to this one during our marathon season of work suddenly felt like pig feed. Our hearts weren’t brought back to life because the dinner was swanky or exclusive; our hearts revived because the food was intentional and curated with love. The meal nourished my soul in places I didn’t realize I was starving.

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After dark chocolate ganache flourless cake and specialty roasted coffee, Matthew took us to see an oversized refrigerator in the garage where he cured meat and aged cheeses—the ones we munched on earlier. Then, we followed him to the backyard to see his lush garden boxes of lettuces, an array of spices, and lemon trees.

The four of us talked late into the evening, and I didn’t want to leave. By the time we said good-bye, a spiritual bond had formed. We had arrived cranky, sore, and exhausted, but left satiated in our bellies and hearts. Together we had enjoyed the gift of food, the gift of togetherness, the gift of presence. As Christian Morgenstern might say, we came home.



Bible Readings

1 Kings 17:12-16 But she said, “I swear by the Lord your God that I don’t have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die.” But Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you’ve said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what’s left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!” So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

Luke 10:34: Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Acts 2:46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

Questions to Ponder

1. Which part or course of the meal Margaret Feinburg describes makes your mouth water the most? What is the most delicious meal you’ve ever had?
2. Just water and bread, made simply with oil and flour, is not exceptionally scrumptious...but it would be if it’s all you had. Wouldn’t that meal mean more than just filling your belly? Why?
3. Have you ever used a food item to heal a wound? Like the olive oil on the Samaritans wound.
4. What is it about breaking bread with others that makes it so special? Why do you think Jesus taught this way? How is eating a meal together similar to healing one another?

Recipes of the Week

Food for the Soul – the dish, snack, dessert recipe that just feeds your soul.

Notes: