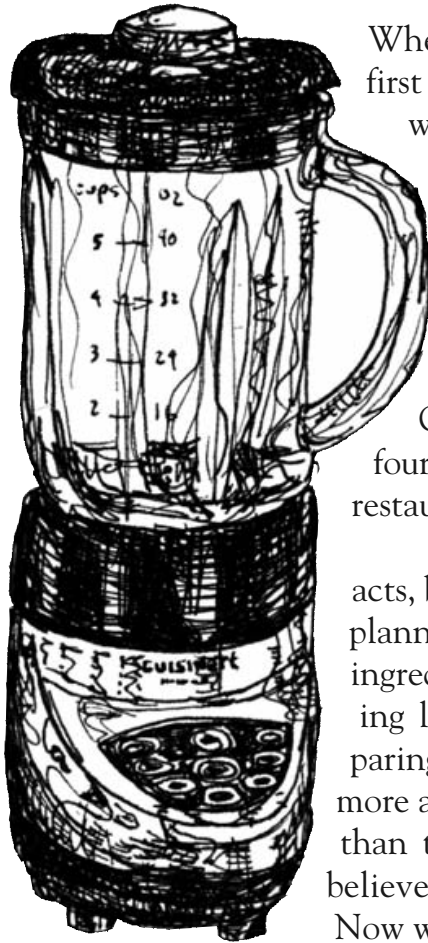


INTRODUCTION

This double issue collects the best literature and art about food that we could find: food as sensuality, food as sustenance, food as an introduction to a foreign culture, food as sex, food as power, food as class, food as history, food as connection to family, or food as substitute for any of those things.



We can eat with others or eat alone. When we feel uncertain or insecure (say, on a first date or attempting a conciliatory meeting with an ex) we often dine together, “break bread,” share a common act. Among our first thoughts about upcoming birthdays, holidays, and celebrations is what to cook or eat. Eating alone can be an extravagant indulgence, or it can be perfunctory. It can also be horribly lonely. Our culture’s preferences are reflected in four-chair dinette sets and a scarcity of restaurant tables or booths for one.

Reading and writing are usually solitary acts, but this issue feels more like a banquet. We planned it and created it from the most diverse ingredients, sometimes squabbling and squawking like too many cooks in the kitchen. Preparing this issue, I realize that nothing tells us more about who we are and where we come from than the food we eat—and cook. If you don’t believe me, try our contributors’ recipes in back.

Now we invite you to take your seat at our table. Despite the different backgrounds, styles, schools, and conventions (and of course, tastes), I like to think that we can all sit together under one issue and do something honest and simple and pleasurable: dig in.

—Richard Newman
Spring, 2008