

building, but I think that's the beginning of being someone's mom.

Jo Piazza is the author of the memoir [How to Be Married](#).

Political Sustenance

By Alicia Kennedy



“I love you all like cooked food,” said a woman on the A train. She was yelling about our depressing political climate in the mode of a preacher, trying to incite the exhausted hordes to action; it was an odd feeling, to hear someone yelling on a subway who made sense. And that choice of words: “I love you all like cooked food,” like a sense of home and comfort and nourishment — a love necessary to political resistance.

Revolution and food have gone hand in hand for centuries. Suffragettes **used cookbooks** to push women to fight for their right to vote. When **the Bloodroot Collective**, an ecofeminist restaurant in Bridgeport, Connecticut, started to put out cookbooks in 1981, the first was called *The Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook*. In all subsequent books, they begin with essays on feminism and the economics of running a collective, and you’ll find a quote from Adrienne Rich beneath instructions on making nut butter. The co-author of their *Best of Bloodroot* collections, Lagusta Yearwood, furthers their work as an “antipreneur anarchist” at her New Paltz, New York, chocolate shop, **Lagusta’s Luscious**, and café, **Commissary**; at the latter, the counter is branded with the words “Resistance is fertile.” (For a taste of fertile resistance in New York City, stop into **Confectionery** in the East Village.) Beyond feminism and anti-capitalism, there are also anti-colonialist cookbooks like ***Decolonize Your Diet*** by the academic Chicanxs Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel, who focus on reclaiming the foods of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Recipes such as Chicano Power Chili Beans and Cashew Crema seek to connect health, flavor, and a responsibility to the land. It’s a perspective I’ve seen in action in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, with **chef Paxe Caraballo Moll’s #queersinthekitchen hashtag** on Instagram and the entire motivation of **El Departamento de la Comida** and **Efecto Sombrilla**, a café and store selling and cooking with local produce.

While the ties between food and resistance may have seemed theoretical to many before, the Trump presidency has created new urgency around any and all ways we can push back. This was especially apparent to Anna Brones, writer and publisher of the ***Comestible*** quarterly zine, which focuses on essays and recipes by women and nonbinary writers that explore issues like what we cook in the worst moments of our lives, or how we can create a class-inclusive food movement. Brones, an artist and author of the books ***The Culinary Cyclist*** and ***Fika: The Art of the Swedish Coffee Break***, used this platform to release a special post-Inauguration edition, **“Protest Fuel: The Revolution Must Be Fed.”** The pocket-size zine doesn’t just have recipes, but essays on how food works into self-care and feeding your community. Chicano food writer Teresa Finney’s arroz rojo recipe is introduced by a brief essay on the humble food’s ability to connect her to her roots in California no matter where she lives. “It’s just basically super-important to me to remind anyone who will listen that Mexican immigrants deserve respect and care as human beings, not just as the people who make your fucking

mission-style burritos, she says. This is what has made food political (and very personal) to me.”

Anna and I talked recently about the project’s inspiration.

Alicia Kennedy: When did your own journal come about?

Anna Brones: I’d had for a while the idea to do a small food magazine. I was just fed up with a lot of food media at the time — too much food porn, too little actual substance. So I had this idea for a quarterly journal, *Comestible*, an indie journal that has recipes but is heavy on essays and using food as a lens for looking at everything from gender to agriculture. It’s more focused on food and food production than celebrity chefs. I crowd-funded that; did all the layout and stuff myself; I have it printed locally outside Seattle; I do all the fulfillment — it’s definitely a one-lady show.

AK: What inspired *Protest Fuel*?

AB: When the election happened — or when all of last year happened — I was, of course, very sad, like a lot of people, and in that week after the election was like: *What do I do?* A friend had posted a photo on Instagram about protesting, and a comment there led to the idea of “protest fuel,” and I was like, *I should make a collection of recipes for that.* It just spurred this idea, and I have this publishing experience and platform, and what better way to use that than for a cause-driven thing? I just reached out to my community and others, saying, “I’m doing this thing; I can’t pay you; I’m going to donate all the proceeds; does anybody have anything they want to contribute? It can be an essay, a recipe, art. I know you’re riled up, so channel that energy into something positive.” That’s how it came together. For me, personally, after having launched *Comestible* last year, you’ve just gotta fucking do it. Whatever idea you have, if you’re stoked on it, just do it and don’t worry. You can’t think too far down the line because you’ll just psych yourself out. You just have to throw yourself in.

AK: Why did you decide to donate the proceeds to [the World Women’s Environment and Development Organization](#)?

AB: I knew I wanted to donate all the proceeds, and quite honestly, I think — this is gonna sound bad — but I don’t think where I donated the money was necessarily the point. It was really important to me to donate to an organization that stood for the things that I feel very strongly about, but I think that the point was more to say: “Here is something that a lot of people contributed to all out of the good of their hearts, with the intention of wanting to create a better world. We are putting this into the world, and we are not taking a cut on this; we’re giving the money away.” There are so many amazing organizations out there, so it was really difficult to choose. Originally, I wanted to give

money to the ACLU, but a friend of mine said, “maybe find something else that’s not getting as much attention or really speaks to you.” The World Women’s Environment and Development Organization, which was started back in the ’70s by badass women that were part of the feminist movement — including [the scholar and activist] [Vandana Shiva](#), who I have a lot of respect for. They work on more of an international policy level as opposed to grassroots, but they do work with grassroots organizations. For me, gender and environment go hand in hand, just like gender and every other topic go hand in hand, but that just kind of felt like a good place to give the money. Like I said, where the money went necessarily wasn’t the main point. You’re not going to raise tens of thousands of dollars from an indie zine. It’s more that I really wanted people who were taking part to feel empowered to maybe even go on and do something else after doing this, and I wanted people to read it and take away, *This is mostly focused on food, but it’s meant to inspire action.*

Arroz Rojo by [Teresa Finney](#)

Serves 4 to 6

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 small yellow onion (about ⅓ cup), diced
2 ½ cups white rice
1 (8-ounce) can tomato purée
16 ounces water or chicken broth
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon Mexican oregano
Salt and black pepper, to taste

1. Heat two tablespoons of vegetable oil in a medium-sized skillet over medium-high flame.
2. Add the diced onion and cook until tender and translucent.
3. Add the rice to the skillet, and stir until lightly brown and toasted. Next, add the can of tomato purée. Fill the empty tomato-purée can twice with water, chicken broth, or one of each. The rice should be covered with the liquid.
4. Add in salt, pepper, cumin, and oregano. Stir continuously until the liquid boils, then continue to let boil for 2 to 3 minutes to allow the rice to soften.
5. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and let the rice continue cooking for 10 to 15 minutes. You’ll know when the rice is done when the liquid has evaporated. If there are any leftovers the next morning, add a fried egg on top and douse with hot sauce.

This interview has been condensed and edited.

Alicia Kennedy is a writer from Long Island who focuses on food, politics, and rum. Her website is la-pirata.com.