THE PEOPLE’S SUPPER

RITUAL ZINE

a compilation of opening and closing rituals, crowd-sourced by and for hosts
WHAT’S HERE

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CREATING AN ALTAR \& MAKING IT NICE

Transforming The People’s Supper space can be a ritual in itself. Leave some time to make things nice, whether you’re creating an altar, setting out candles, putting on mood music or transforming a barn into a backyard dreamscape.

#makeitnice: candles on the table, cloth napkins, colorful table cloths or paper on the table and crayons or markers, confetti on the table, a small token on each plate like a flower, pin, magnet, note, or other creative welcome - all of these welcome your guests to the table. They can also serve as a little take-home gift. Sometimes mix-and-match or quirky decorations feel right, sometimes coordinated everything feels best.

Have fun! Be frugal. Play and ultimately … relax.
An altar does not necessarily have to be tied to religious practice. Altars are a place of remembrance, celebration, anticipation and sharing. All of that can be tied in with religious symbols - or not.

Spiritual and religious symbols of all kinds exist. Instead of those with images of blood or sacrifice, look for those that invite people to faith, hope, love and renewal - creating an invitational space where we can share the best of our traditions. If you are providing a space where all are welcome, regardless of religious affiliation, you may want to include your religious symbols and invite others to bring something that represents their beliefs. Or, you may want to include a jar or bowl where people can write down a prayer or word that is meaningful to them.

**altar item brainstorm**

- flowers
- stones
- quotes on scraps of paper
- ribbons
- photographs
- candles
- sweets
- fabric
- mementos
- found treasures
- favorite foods
CHECK IN WITH YOU

“Take a walk around the block. Step out of the steamy kitchen before guests arrive, clear your head, remember why you’re doing this and feel some fresh air on your face. It helps reset my perspective, get out of the craze of cooking for 10, and back into my heart about what I hope to bring to the table. I scan the stories inside of me to find what feels most open. Is it that my dad’s birthday was last week, and I totally forgot? Is it a concern with my brother, or a reason to celebrate? I listen for where there’s the most vibrancy within me - and use that anecdote to begin the conversation.

By tuning into what’s hot within me, it invites others around the table to find a way to introduce themselves that’s not planned talking points or rote stories, but what’s active and real.”

movement meditation

Plan time in your day the day of the dinner to exercise, stretch or even get an extra nap. Tuning in to the extra movement and/or rest that will give you the energy for a night of hospitality will make you happier and make it easier to deal with any challenges that arrive or messes that need to be cleaned up. Being grounded in your body is a gift to yourself as you are in the midst of giving so much to those you are serving and entertaining.

being prepared

“I am a Virgo and like to be as prepared as possible with some questions that might or might not make it into a dinner. Usually, I take a little bit of time thinking about what hosting a dinner means to me in that moment, what things have come up for me in the recent past, and what things I am curious about with others. My lead-in is usually something specific that I’ve been thinking about or that’s come up, and then ask others how it is for them. I find that true curiosity can open a lot of doors.”
OPENING RITUALS

“Something I do before the dinner is ask guests if they have any songs or bands that strike a chord with their current struggles and joys, or even just any music that makes them feel good, so to add to the evening’s playlist.”

create place cards where people can fill in the blank

“Ask me about ...” (Host can prompt people to fill in the blank with someone who inspires them, a favorite movie or place to spend time, or it can be free-for-all: “Ask me about anything, this is just what I want to talk about tonight.”) These can be used as conversation-starters, or the host can start off the dinner by asking people to share about what they wrote.

have a nametag or place card station

Have some anxiety about forgetting people’s names? Break the ice by 1) admitting that I can be forgetful about names, and 2) setting up a little area on a table with crayons, markers, stickers and either index cards or folded sheets of blank paper (for place cards), or sticky name tags and invite people to make their own name tags with pictures, symbols, color – anything that describes them. You may also invite them to put the name they go by and their gender pronouns. Sometimes there is a lot of creativity and interaction and at the very least it gives nervous and/or early people something to do and it helps me remember everyone’s names on unique tags.
This is a great way to bring everyone into the space ... a brave space where we commit to being together. Have each guest read a line out loud to get a dinner started.

The Brave Space Invitation
By Micky ScottBey Jones

Together we will create brave space
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow. We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be our brave space together,
and
We will work on it side by side
FOUR MINI MEDITATIONS

Once everyone is at the table, you may want to kick off with an opening ritual or brief meditation, as a way for guests to tune out all the noise of the preceding day and tune into the conversation to come.

A few we love:

I. close your eyes. take a deep breath. when you’re ready, open your eyes.

II. feel your feet on the floor. feel your legs supported by your chair. feel your arms resting. feel your torso upright. feel your head resting on top of your shoulders. notice your awareness of your entire body. breathe in. breathe out. when you’re ready, open your eyes.

III. close your eyes and connect with your intention. why did you come to this dinner? what would you like to receive from this dinner? take a moment to be with your intention. when you’re ready, open your eyes.

IV. lean back. feel your back which is supported by your chair. lean back into the chair and feel the support. lean back and feel the support of the other people around the table. lean back and feel the support of your community. lean back and feel deeply into the support of your ancestry. feel the support of those who came before you. allow yourself to relax and feel supported.

(Note: Notice the conversation getting heated at any point? These mini-meditations can also be a great way to ease tension and bring the conversation back: “Let’s all just take a minute to pause and to close our eyes …”)
Toasts are a great way to kick off a conversation. Once everyone has plated up, invite everyone to raise their glass (water, wine, whatever it may be).

I. let us raise our glasses to remember the challenges and the joys of this last week. we made it! may we remember the faces around this table when next week’s challenges and joys dance around us and may that memory give us hope and strength.

II. may you be blessed! may you have hope! may you savor the flavors and aromas of life even in the midst of a crazy world!

III. to life! to love! to new friendships and blossoming opportunities that start around the dinner table!

IV. let us raise our glasses to the family and friends who taught us to treat others with love, to be curious about the world and to show kindness to our neighbors.

V. raise your glass to those who have lived before you, who resisted injustice, who lived and loved despite many challenges and oppression, who you wish could be here tonight at this dinner. elevated: have each person say the name out loud: elevate raise your glass to those that came before us and to those around the table tonight. may this dinner provide us the nourishment we seek. may this meal nourish our stomachs, strengthen our resistance, remind of us of our worthiness, and bless us with compassion for ourselves and others within our struggles.
VI. we are the children of the ones who persevered. we raise a glass to those who left us a testimony and to the ones we will never know. may we live lives of love and hope as a tribute to our ancestors and our elders. we are their wildest dreams and more than they could have imagined.

VII. raise your glass to the daily act of living that got us here today. my life is resistance. your life is resistance. raise your glass to living - to surviving, to thriving, to joy in the struggle. may this meal nourish our bodies and souls, fill us with delicious extravagant laughter and dishes and remind us of how we make the most with what we have.

VIII. to radical hospitality. to unity in diversity. to revolutionary love. we raise

IX. invite everyone to light a tealight candle and share the name of a person who inspires courage in you, living or dead, famous or familial, and why. toast those just named, and those who inspire us to be our best selves, and ourselves and each other for having the guts to step into a space of vulnerability right now.
CLOSING

At the end of a dinner, take a moment of silence around the table and breathe. On the in-breath, inhale the suffering and discomfort of another being. It can be yourself, someone you’ve physically or emotionally lost, your family, friends, or another dinner guest tonight. It can someone you love with all your heart, or someone you can’t forgive. Let the moment decide.

This is based on a type of compassionate meditation known as Tonglen, as described by Pema Chödrön: “So in the in-breath you breathe in with the wish to take away the suffering, and breathe out with the wish to send comfort and happiness to the same people, animals, nations, or whatever it is you decide.”

**Breathe in** with the knowledge that you are strong enough to help carry the discomfort and suffering you long to be rid of. Breathe in fear for someone whose future feels uncertain, breathe in disappointment for someone who feels they have lost, breathe in loneliness for someone who isolates, or breathe in frustration for someone who feels misunderstood.

**Then, breathe out** with the desire to relieve those suffering, to give those who need it extra strength, to send out love, compassion and understanding. Breathe out health, love, family, support and forgiveness. Breathe out all of the things we try to hold onto or try to achieve for ourselves. Give them away. Imagine breathing out beautiful, heart-shaped breaths. In the midst of our sadness, where we are tempted to isolate, feel alone and misunderstood, we can give love to others simply through the breath. Sometimes, it may be all we have to give.
CLOSING CONTINUED: **MINI-LOVINGKINDNESS (MINI-METTA) MEDITATION**

Take a moment to close your eyes if that is comfortable for you or to gently gaze ahead toward the floor if you prefer. Notice the rhythm of your breathing...in...and out...and in again. Next time you breathe in, breathe in as deeply as you can and when you are ready...let all that breath go. Now just keep breathing as deeply and gently as is comfortable and natural for you. Enjoy the warming breath flowing throughout your body.

Now, think about yourself. Yes. Yourself. Concentrate on warm, kind and loving feelings in your chest...around your heart ... surrounding your body.

Say to yourself, in your head or quietly to yourself ...

May I be well.

May I be happy.

May I be safe.

May I live with joy and love.

Now, think about the people around this table. Some you may know well, some you may have just met ... as you feel comfortable, hold them in your heart and say to yourself, in your head or quietly to yourself ...

May you be well.

May you be happy.

May you be safe.

May you live with joy and love.

And as we go out into the world ... hold in your mind those out there in this neighborhood, in our city/town, in our region, country and the world - as wide as you want to open your heart and wish love for the world. Say to yourself, in your head or quietly to yourself ...

May you be well.

May you be happy.

May you be safe.

May you live with joy and love.

Now ... take a deep breath ... filling up your lungs with more joy and love ... and exhale ... sending that love and joy out into the world. Blink open your eyes and bring your full consciousness back to the room.

Good job.
WRAPPING THINGS UP

“One of the things that I’ve done at the end of a dinner - in honor of my mom - is asking my table one thing in the past few weeks that they’ve accomplished that they are proud of themselves for doing. My mom was a big advocate for me and source of support and I want to pass this on to those who now sit at my dinner table.”

closing questions - encourage one word or short phrase answers

“What is something coming up in the next week that you’re looking forward to?”

“What are you going to do after this dinner for self-care?”

“What is something you can do to let your community/friends know you need support or care?”

“How are you offering care to others in a way that is mutually beneficial, right now?”

“Let’s close with one word that describes how we feel at this moment.”

“Let’s end with a word that reflects what you’re going to take away from the meal.”

thanks and goodnight

“We are almost out of time, so please join me in the kitchen for family-style dishwashing.”

“Thank you for coming and bringing your full self to the table.”
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