

Meaningful Meal (see advance prep instructions at end)

Opening words and Chalice lighting:

Abbess Koei Hoshino practices shojin cooking, a method of cooking vegetarian food developed by Zen monks and nuns to aid their spiritual practice. The word “shojin” is composed of the Chinese characters for “spirit” and “to prepare”. The tradition includes not only the immediate preparation of food in a mindful way, but every aspect of the process from the cultivation of plants to placing the food on the table.

Welcome and check-in (A time to share what is on your mind in order to clear it and be in the present.)

Sharing the Meal

Each person brings a dish to share that has some meaningful connection to his/her life. Each dish is served individually to participants. When everyone has been served, the server introduces the dish in the form, “I offer this food in gratitude for (or ‘in memory of’ or ‘in celebration of’ [insert the memory, event or basis which makes this food meaningful in your life]. *Example, “I offer these cinnamon rolls in memory of my Grandmother who always got up early in the mornings on weekends when I would visit her and had them fresh from the oven when I would wake up.”*

After the dish is introduced, everyone is welcome to consume the dish and respond to the food and/or the introduction. Repeat for each dish.

Questions for discussion

- What methods do you use as you prepare food to become more mindful in and out of the kitchen?
- How does food fit into your life? Are you always “on the run”, eating alone or with others?
- What do you need from those around you in order to be successful in eating or drinking what is best for you.

Check-out (A time to share likes and wishes, such as “I like how we...” “I wish we would...”, or express how you felt about the group.)

Closing words and extinguishing the Chalice:

As I stir the soup it occurs to me how much more cooperative vegetables are than people, especially when it comes to blending together and creating a whole. Vegetables cooperate into soup, blending people together was another story entirely, although here in Buddha’s kitchen we all at least try to get along, to work together, cooperate like vegetables in the soup. Carrots don’t swim to the surface saying, “Look, look, I’m a carrot. I’m the most important thing in the soup.” It just adds flavor and nourishment to the stock. Nor does mushroom-barley soup strut around saying that it tastes better than yesterday’s yaki-soba. People could learn a lot from vegetables from being part of the soup.

From In Budda’s Kitchen

Thanks to everyone for their participation and commitment to our group!

Advance Prep Instructions: read or handout at the meeting before this session.

For our next meeting, please bring with you a food that has some meaningful connection to your life. It could be your favorite food when you were young, a food that reminds you of a time/place in your life, or perhaps a “comfort food” you eat when you are down. Please bring enough of your meaningful food so that everyone in your circle can receive a portion.

There should be a quick discussion about dietary restrictions of the members the meeting prior. It is okay to bring a food that not everyone can eat, but try to bring some kind of alternative for those who will not be able to eat your food.

Be prepared to share with others why this particular food is meaningful to you.