

# Zen Bow

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EATING

# *Zen Bow: Eating*

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Tom Kowal

## The Intimacy of Eating

ALLEN BROADMAN

If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe.

—Carl Sagan

Eating is so intimate. Just as with breathing, eating is the interaction between our own body and the body of the universe with which we are fully connected. The Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh says that we ‘inter-are’ with things, and with eating, if we look carefully, that interbeing has an opportunity to be revealed.

Our moment-to-moment life process is nourished by air, water, and food. It cannot proceed without such essentials. The very substance of our physical body is created by the consumption of other organic materials, and by the air we breathe and the water we drink. The cells that make up our skin, bones, blood—every material

aspect of us comes from the food we eat. Every piece of bread, every egg, every leaf of spinach—almost every single bite of everything we eat is transformed into the material of our bodies. Our bodies take all the energy and nutrients they can out of what we eat, and with that energy and nutrients, new cells are created, dead cells are cleansed, and all the body’s processes, such as our breath and our beating hearts, are furnished with the fuel needed for life to continue.

This intimacy of eating can be subtle. We eat some buttered toast and our fingernails grow. We eat a salad and our heart beats. We eat some scrambled eggs and we can breathe. This connection is easily missed. It is not always obvious that this morning’s coffee and muffin are next week’s bones, or that this afternoon’s sandwich is tomorrow’s bicycle ride. But how can we

ride a bicycle in the future without this afternoon's sandwich? We truly can't. Without this afternoon's sandwich, there is no bicycle riding or walking or talking to our friends. Without this coffee and muffin, there is no breathing, no beating heart, no moving the hands or feet—not even thinking. Our consciousness as manifested in this very moment is sustained by our consumption of food and water—as we chant at formal meals, we can be grateful for such sustenance.

Eating is transformation, and transformation is always intimate because it is the very definition of how that which comes before and that which comes after are connected. In eating, we transform one kind of organic, living material into another kind—we transform food into this very body. This transformation is incredible—it can change lettuce and tomatoes into the infinite activities of our body and mind. And we don't even need to think about it to make it happen—we don't need to willfully change food into energy and into bone and skin—it just happens while we're busy doing other things. Is that not miraculous? We often search the world looking for signs of divine inspirations, and yet all the while we are part of a process that is changing plants and animals into our very own body-mind. If this is not miraculous then what could possibly be called a miracle?

The intimacy of our eating joins us to everything. To eat an apple is to join our very own life with the life of the apple. We take the life of the apple and transform it into our own life—into our breath, into our flesh. Not only does eating an apple join our life to the apple, but it joins our life to all that went into making that apple. That apple itself is the result of a living process in which the apple tree, like us, joined itself with other things so that *it* might grow. The apple tree needed air, water, sunlight, and soil so that it could live—the apple tree transformed those things into itself, exactly as we transform the apple into ourselves. Since we depend upon the apple for our lives to continue, we also depend on everything the apple depends upon. And that means not only the apple tree, but all the

things necessary to bring that apple into such close contact with us that it could be eaten. If we got the apple at a market, our receiving the apple depended upon whoever drove the apple to the market. If the apple came from an orchard, the apple's life depended on the farmer's life, and the farmer's life depended upon as many different things as our own life depends upon. What is there that could possibly *not* be connected to this apple if we look at the interdependence of all things carefully enough?

In *The Harmony of Relative and Absolute* we chant, 'If you do not see the way, you do not see it even as you walk on it,' and this is true of eating. The intimacy of eating is not a choice and not an option. Eating is a fundamental connection to all of creation whether we realize it or not. But we often miss this wondrous dimension of eating because we eat and do something else at the same time. We eat and read, we eat and watch TV, we eat and listen to the radio, we eat and drive, we eat and talk on the phone, and we eat and 'run.' Every time we eat and 'do something else,' some or even all of the intimacy and wonder of eating is lost. It is not just that we haven't really tasted our food when we have a meal while doing other things—the greater loss is that we have missed an opportunity to feel and experience one of the basic ways we are connected to all things, one of the fundamental ways we 'inter-are.'

In missing the wonder, we risk losing our respect for this miraculous process—we lose the understanding that with deep connection comes deep responsibility. Intimate and mindful eating reminds us of the significance of our eating choices. This deep connection means that we are joined not only to the bites of our food, but to the lives of whatever living beings those bites have come from. The lives of those beings are often hidden by the processing of food and by modern life itself, which separates by great distance the eater from the living creatures being eaten.

Sometimes we still see the connection, for example when we eat a piece of corn or a sweet potato—it's very simple and direct. Yet in our



Amaury Cruz

bread is the life of the wheat, even if it's not as obvious when staring at our morning toast. In our yogurt and milk is the life of the cow, but that cow's life is in our pizza slice, too, even if it's harder to see. Fast food is the ultimate cloak over this connection because it is food that has been so processed that all resemblance to the living beings it came from has been lost. The chicken 'McNugget' does not look like chicken, it does not taste like chicken, and is delivered so 'fast' that we forget that a chicken lived and died in order to make it. How can we realize that the chicken's birth, death, and its entire life went into that nugget when the food arrives two minutes after we ask for it, with no chicken anywhere in sight? That nugget is a willfully constructed illusion because it hides, rather than reveals, the intimate connection between each bite of food and the living beings and great efforts that helped that bite arrive close enough to us to be eaten and to give us nourishment.

This illusion is very much a by-product of modern life. Ancient peoples had less difficulty

understanding the intimacy of eating and the connection between the eater and what is eaten because the hunting, gathering, and preparation of food was a major part of everyday life and involved almost everybody. When you shoot an arrow through a deer's heart and watch it die, that's intimacy. In that kind of intimacy there is no illusion about where this meal has come from. There is no slaughterhouse or industrial process to hide the intimacy. People can argue if such killing is cruelty or if it is the natural way of things, but the intimacy is undeniable. The same is just as true when picking berries or squeezing a cow's udder—these are activities that reveal our deep connection to the living beings that sustain our lives. With your face right next to the cow, close enough to smell her, how could anyone forget where butter comes from? But such opportunities are rare for many people today, and microwavable, instant packages of food often don't inspire reverence for life in the eater. Today we so badly need to bring back that reverence which has been lost over time, that

reverence which inspired some of our ancestors to express their deep gratitude for food in rituals and myths that were part of the very fabric of their culture.

In reverence for the lives of beings that sustain us, we find the roots of motivation to make better choices about what we eat. The first cardinal precept is deeply entwined here with our eating choices. ‘To cherish all life’—the precept is asking us to be mindful of all beings that sustain us, to understand how such beings have lived and have suffered. Arguments about what is or is not the ‘natural’ diet for humans are a distraction here. We can eat in ways that either require more suffering or require less suffering from other beings—the choice is ours. And we always have a choice, whether we exercise it or not.

This precept challenges us to consider our choices to consume other beings and to make such choices with wisdom. The precept asks us to make those choices in ways that cherish those beings, even as we acknowledge that other beings must die in order for us to live, without exception. It is not a matter of *if* other living creatures will die so that we may live; it is only a matter of *which* other creatures will die and *how* they might suffer—both during their deaths and their lives. Even the strictest of vegans must take

other life in order to sustain their own—to deny the death of plant life is to deny the very essence of birth and death. We have no control over the ‘if’ of taking life, but we have much control over the ‘which’ and the ‘how’ of it all, and we should exercise that control with the utmost attention.

One day our own lives will come to an end and our bodies may transform to become nourishment for other living beings. But right now, each of us is leaving an imprint on this world, an imprint created in the brief span between our birth and death, an imprint that spreads out across the earth. We have some control over the nature of this imprint because its roots lie within the lifetime of choices we make of action, speech, and thought. Of all the many choices we make, our eating choices are some of the most impactful, and are deserving of our greatest consideration and mindfulness. With every bite comes great responsibility. We owe it to ourselves and to all living beings to slow down and to chew carefully both on our food and on the meaning of it all.

*Allen Broadman has been a member of the Rochester Zen Center for over ten years, and has been mostly eating a vegetarian diet for longer than that. He has never had to shoot a deer.*

*Countless Good Deeds.*

If you’re thinking about financial planning, estate planning, or both, please remember that there are myriad ways you can help the Rochester Zen Center through planned giving. The right kind of plan can help you reduce your taxes significantly while providing for a larger, longer-lasting gift to the Zen Center. Because there is a wide array of bequests, annuities, trusts, and other financial vehicles to consider, you’ll want to work with your financial advisor to decide what’s best for you. Long-time Zen Center member David Kernan, an attorney who concentrates his practice in tax law, has generously offered to help point you in the right direction at no charge. For more information about planned giving and David’s offer, please contact the Center’s receptionist.



Tom Kowal

## Appetite and its Discontents

JAY THOMPSON

The carrot slices. The pan sautés. The parsley garnishes. The platter serves. How wonderful! The meal is ready, without doing a single thing.

One of the best meals I ever had was tofu, peas, and mushrooms on day four of a sesshin many years ago. After sesshin I got the recipe and tried to recreate that dish at home—and failed over and over. It took many years before I realized that the secret ingredient was *attention*.

Cooks know that blending ingredients to balance the familiar four classic tastes of sweet, sour, bitter, and salt can make an ordinary dish special. Experienced cooks even know about a fifth sense, called *umami*, which reflects savory and can make a dish exquisite. However, knowledge of the senses does not guarantee that attention is getting much, well, attention. Attention is in

everyone's pantry, but a lot of folks don't know it's there, let alone know how to use it. Moreover, attention doesn't just transform boiled turnips and kasha into ambrosia—it can purify food made by less-than-stellar chefs (think Cookie in *Beetle Bailey*). A deeply entrenched view in our culture is that food 'does stuff' to us, it's a one-way relationship where we are forced by having a body to allow all these substances to come inside and have their way with us. Unless we are extremely vigilant, obesity, GERD, metabolic imbalance, and so on, will ensue. Is it so surprising, when our worldview holds food to be a seductive but necessary evil, that our stomachs are a battleground and that every meal is a skirmish with collateral damage showing up in our blood levels? Equally true, however, is that



Steve Piper

when we welcome food as a dear friend who has offered itself, and pay full and loving attention, then our meals become allies and will nourish and uphold us.

Would that it were all so easy. Simple, yes—easy, no. With a few days of sesshin under your obi, it gets a little clearer, but what about the day-to-day and the eternal question: What's for supper tonight?

Some of the most common barriers to mindful food preparation and consumption are easily addressed in a home kitchen. These comments apply to cooking and eating equally.

*Clutter:* So many kitchens are the repositories of the family's works-in-progress. There's stuff waiting to go to the car or the basement, keys/glasses/cellphones by the back door, a jumble of boots and shoes, a pile of dirty dishes. Compound this with a radio's noise or a TV news program, and the kitchen becomes the last place

you would ever want to cook a meal. In Zen monasteries, as Roshi Kapleau always reminded us, the kitchen is second only to the zendo in importance, so please do what you can to maintain—or, if necessary, to recreate each day—a reasonably spare and reverent place to cook and eat. Mind-clutter, too, will hinder anything you attempt to do with food, and bringing the detritus of your workday into the preparation of a meal is a disservice to yourself, to your family, and, of course, to the food itself.

*Cookbooks and TV Shows:* The media attention to food is greater than attention paid to actual cooking and eating. Whenever I'm in a waiting room, the obligatory TV is always tuned to a cooking show. *Barnes and Noble* bookstores have aisles and aisles of cookbooks, and most people I know have more cookbooks than any other kind of reading material. Yet, people cook less and less. Roshi Kapleau often inveighed against

reading, but did allow that reading a book that sent you to the mat could be a good thing. Likewise with cookbooks and *Iron Chef*—if you are actually cooking regularly, a little cooking demo now and again probably won't hurt. One disheartening effect of this media absorption with cooking is that people decide they *can't* cook (*i.e.*, 'I'll never be as good as *Iron Chef*'), or think that 'real' cooking must recreate fare found in high-end restaurants. Do people stop walking and running because they can't do it at the level of an Olympian? Of course not, nor should one hold off on doing something as natural as preparing food just because it won't look like a dish prepared by French chef Paul Bocuse.

*Nutrition:* In the United States, foodstuffs are like celebrities. Coconut water and acai berries seem to have a lot of box office draw now, and broccoli—like an aging character actor—still gets steady work. There are also plenty of villains: butter, salt, sugar, bananas, potatoes ... the list goes on. To base your cooking—and eating—on the shifting sands of nutritional science will distance you from a mindful relationship to food. 'Real food' (that is, mostly unprocessed food) will not hurt you, when taken in moderation—unless, of course, you have a medical condition such as celiac disease. To eat in order to 'get more nutrients' or 'get more protein' shows a lack of faith, both in your own body's ability to accept nourishment from what is taken in and in the food's innate wholeness.

*Freshness and Provenance:* How well I recall Roshi Kapleau's scornful refrain, 'Leftover food is dead food!' Fortunately, staff members were not of the same mind, so leftovers found their way to the staff kitchen rather than to Roshi Kapleau's fridge. But what to make of food that is old, or wilted, or cooked last Thursday? And what about food that left its field many weeks and miles ago, but which has been kept in suspended animation for the duration ... and then brought back to life for its final performance in the grocery produce section? What of frozen and canned foods, also leftovers if you think

of them as something cooked a long time ago? Neither leftovers nor well-travelled food aligns too well with the 'farm-to-table freshness' ideal, but a mindful cook's reverence—and a grateful eater's enthusiasm—can transform them. Don't give up on that tired parsnip at the bottom of the vegetable drawer!



The above comments comprise something of a rule-based approach to mindful cooking, and this certainly may be helpful. It is also helpful to remember Shantideva's words:

Whatever joy there is in this world  
All comes from desiring others to be happy,  
And whatever suffering there is in this world  
All comes from desiring myself to be happy

What a gift: to desire others' happiness so much that you cook for them, day after day. What a gift: to desire others' happiness so much that you eat what is offered, day after day, or forego eating so that another might not go hungry. When you go to the public market, the bushels and pecks and bunches of leaves and roots and fruits all reach out, lovingly giving themselves in all their luscious bounty: how can we be any less caring? 'Our lives are sustained by these offerings, let us be grateful'—offerings received and offerings given, the diner and the cook, breathing in and breathing out. The cook's most precious attribute—a compassionate and grateful heart.



The soup stirs. The salt sprinkles. The mouth tastes. The ladle dips.

(Better check my bowl for eyebrows.)

*Jay Thompson served on staff at the Zen Center in the 1970s and worked in the kitchen for many of those years. Most of what he learned about cooking was by way of training under Roshi Kapleau.*



Richard von Sturmer

## Work Practice Among Tomato Plants

JOANNA R. PERNICK

What we eat grows from the earth. Although this may seem like an obvious statement, it's easy to take for granted what a plant looks and feels like, how its growth is nurtured over time, and how to handle it during harvest. If we do think about farming, it's also easy to romanticize it: a picturesque tractor, a plaid flannel shirt, being outdoors, bluegrass music. But farming deserves a lot of respect—both an understanding of how food necessary for sustenance is grown and an appreciation for how hard that work is.

I previously worked closely with farmers for four years, as I coordinated numerous farmers' markets in Philadelphia, and therefore, I thought I understood that farming is hard. But let me tell you, farming is **HARD**. Like every step I've taken along the path of Zen practice, it is so much harder in the experience than I imag-

ined. You have to farm, day after day after day, to actually know this. For the past three months, I've been working at a 15-acre CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm in Victor, New York. My entire body aches from the physically grueling work, I am always hungry or tired or both, I feel like there's no time or energy to do anything but work, and every day I shower off a never-ending layer of sweat and dirt. A friend describes the work on a vegetable farm as 'long, back-breaking, finger-destroying, hot, and sometimes boring.'

What I'm discovering is that like *sesshin*, farming shines an intense light on my practice. There are projects that are enjoyable and feel productive, such as bunching radishes and snapping off ripe red peppers that are easy to reach. Especially at the beginning of my first farming

season, during moments when I'm unbelievably hot and tired, there are projects that seem endless—like washing towers of produce bins, unpleasant—like watering with fish emulsion, painful—like transplanting, or frustratingly all of the above—like trellising tomato plants. In the middle of each of these situations, my reactions and thoughts start becoming clear to me—wanting to keep doing something fun or avoid doing something tiresome, wishing the situation to be different than it is. I find myself indulging in thoughts and preferences rather than simply, presently saying 'yes' and doing what needs to be done.

It also becomes easy to see the extent to which my thoughts slow me down and keep me distant from working as efficiently as possible. Since farm work is a new experience for me, I still spend a lot of time and energy thinking about the past, or whatever I just did. 'Was that lettuce head big enough to harvest? I should've cut it higher or lower. Did I pull off all the yellow leaves, does it look presentable?' Of course, increased confidence will come with experience, but watching the farmer work is a dramatic example of watching someone in no-mind. She works fast, sure, attentive to the quality of whatever she's doing but without worry or unnecessary energy spent on second-guessing herself. She does what needs to be done as best she can and as efficiently as she can. She's just ... there, with her hands and knife and plants.

In spite of my difficulties in being a new farmer, I can't help believing that the vocation of farming contains a deep wisdom. There are cycles of seeding, growth, and harvest, and dying plants are tilled into the ground to enrich the soil. There are simple, repetitive, physical tasks that require complete attention and steady practice. There is a constant awareness that the success of the season is dependent on the weather, beyond our human control. There is no distance between the farmer and nourishment.

I don't know of anyone who illustrates farming as Zen practice better than Wendell Berry, a farmer, teacher, poet, and social critic from Kentucky:

Sowing the seed, my hand is one with the earth. Wanting the seed to grow, my mind is one with the light. Hoeing the crop, my hands are one with the rain. Having cared for the plants, my mind is one with the air. Hungry and trusting, my mind is one with the earth. Eating the fruit, my body is one with the earth.

—Wendell Berry, *Prayers and Sayings of the Mad Farmer IX*

*Joanna Pernick currently lives in Rochester, NY, and works on a farm. She became a member of the Rochester Zen Center in the summer of 2011, when she moved to the Center to participate in the training program.*

# The Middle Way to My Gut

TOM KOWAL

I distinctly remember the time that it really ‘clicked’ and I realized that the food I’m eating used to be a living being. Before then, chicken and hamburger were just groceries purchased from a refrigerator in the grocery store, neatly packaged on a green Styrofoam tray with clear plastic wrap. It was no different than a package of cookies or bag of chips, right? Of course, I always *knew* that chicken was formerly a chicken and that hamburger comes from a cow, but there was a disconnect that prevented me from *realizing* it.

That moment of connection came during a lunch period in tenth grade. I was biting into my chicken sandwich purchased at the school cafeteria, and as I pulled the sandwich away from my lips, I felt a slight tugging that became stronger and then gave way. I sat there staring at my chicken patty in a bun with a three-inch vein dangling from it like a wet gray noodle. That experience didn’t cause me to renounce eating flesh foods on the spot, but I did not finish eating that sandwich; if anything, I just became more careful about what I selected from the school lunch menu. The idea of never again eating meat never crossed my mind. I’m not sure that at the time I even knew what a vegetarian was. There simply weren’t many people who called themselves ‘vegetarian’ in my small Western New York town—and if they did, they would have most likely been considered weird.

Nonetheless, over the next several years I found myself reducing my intake of meat without any conscious effort. While in college I became aware of vegetarianism as a lifestyle and even met some real ones! They seemed healthy and perfectly happy not eating meat. It was around this time that I also discovered the Rochester Zen Center and learned about the practice of vegetarianism in Buddhism. I took

up Zen practice and made a commitment to not eat meat, and even went as far as adopting a vegan diet for a period of time. Of course, my food choices became a big topic at family gatherings and meals. There was great concern about me becoming sick and emaciated. After all, ‘How will you get your protein?’ My responses didn’t make a difference. My family didn’t care that it had been determined that Americans eat much more protein than needed by the body, or that most of the animals that humans eat are themselves vegetarians and need protein to develop the muscle tissue that we eat. My favorite response was from my father on an occasion when I didn’t take any of his barbecued chicken at a picnic: ‘Why don’t you eat chicken? They’re not vicious.’ (No, I don’t understand what he meant by that either. I just chalk it up to him having a few extra beers and trying to be funny.)

It became clear that my family was not willing to really consider my justifications; instead they were concerned that I was rejecting something that they enjoy. It was much easier for them to make jokes or label me as an extremist than to contemplate the food they consume. But a similar social phenomena can be seen within the vegetarian community. Vegans are the ‘extremists’ among those who choose to eat dairy and eggs. Now, there are justifications for eating these items, such as the fact that the people who were able to digest dairy products were the ones able to survive the harsh winters of thousands of years ago. I didn’t disagree with this fact, but I didn’t find it a satisfactory rationale for perpetuating the suffering that takes place in the modern dairy industry. After all, the Donner Party did what they had to in order to survive the winter.

Following college, I became an RZC staff member and developed greater sensitivity to



Tom Kowal

food, perhaps due to the significant amount of zazen. I was truly repulsed by the taste and smell of dairy products and eggs. Yet, after leaving staff, I came to realize that the pendulum had swung too far—my vegan diet had become an attachment. The food I consumed was one of the few areas of my life that I had a bit of control over within the strict training regimen, and I would fight tooth and nail to hold onto it. It became clear that my attachment to a vegan diet was getting in the way of having enjoyable relationships with so many of my friends and family. It took quite a while after leaving staff, but I started to develop a craving for dairy and eggs. I struggled with it for a short time, considering the suffering that does take place to bring those ingredients to our refrigerators, but the cravings were too strong to ignore. My empirical mind was willing to take the chance and see how I felt after reintroducing them to my diet. Maybe there was some physiological reaction or maybe it was simply the giving up of that attachment, but there was a noticeable improvement in my sense of well-being when I resumed eating dairy

and eggs occasionally. Today, most of my meals are still vegan, and I dislike the smell of milk or butter on my lips, but I am a sucker for real ice cream and buttery desserts. If I eat a significant amount of dairy I feel sluggish and congested, so it has become a matter of finding that elusive middle way. For the past couple of years I have even had an occasional meal of fish. Once again, something that I was once repulsed by became a craving, and it seemed that a small amount had a beneficial effect on my body-mind. It has also been helpful to have another menu option when I'm at a restaurant where the only vegetarian dish is overcooked broccoli over pasta drenched in cheese sauce.

Recently I was on a transatlantic flight for which I had requested a vegetarian meal; however, there was no such option for the 'breakfast snack.' The flight attendants simply went down the aisles handing out bags. I opened what appeared to be a cheese sandwich, and realized that it had ham on it. In the past I would have simply pulled the ham off and eaten my cheese sandwich. But for some reason, maybe confu-

sion from the jet lag, I took a moment to think it through a bit more. I asked myself, 'Why is it *more right* to pull it off and discard it, as opposed to eating it?' My self-applied vegetarian label told me that I don't eat meat so as to reduce unnecessary suffering imposed on a sentient being. But in this case the suffering had long passed for that swine, and throwing it away wouldn't change the demand for future slaughters. The dialogue in my weary head went as follows:

'Well, it will probably make me sick, as I haven't eaten meat in some twelve or so years.'

'Sick? Explain that to the pig that died for it. That's what that little bag in the seat pocket in front of you is for.'

'What if I like it? It could be a slippery slope—I will be sneaking out at night going to the BBQ restaurant for a pulled-pork sandwich ...'

'Well, that's probably a risk I can take. There are worse habits to have.'

So I bit into it.

I am happy to report that I did not turn into a blood-thirsty savage, nor did I become violently ill, although my stomach was a little upset for a couple of hours afterward. I realize that the stomach upset could have been a psychosomatic response or simply due to the fact that it was 'airplane food.'

Trying to remain a strict vegetarian while travelling abroad is always an adventure in itself, especially when you're not fluent in the local language. Later on that same trip, my wife, Donna, and I were eating at a buffet-style restaurant that had a mix of vegetarian and meat dishes. I took a scoop of what appeared to be a

vegetarian green bean casserole; however, I am only willing to go so far inspecting the ingredients of a dish in such a situation. I didn't want to make too much of a scene with other hungry people waiting behind me on the buffet line. Donna took the first bite and had an immediate reaction, pointing out that there was *definitely* bacon in there. Here I was again faced with the decision of wasting the food or eating the flesh, but this time it was *bacon*—the one food that even many vegetarians have a hard time giving up! It is supposedly so delicious that it has found its way into just about every corner of the culinary world, including ice cream sundaes, chocolate bars, and chewing gum. I must admit, I was afraid that this one might actually put me over the edge because even I still found the aroma of bacon a bit enticing. So, over the lips and through the gums, look out stomach here it comes! And ... it was disgusting. I did end up eating it, but I mixed it with another dish and held my breath while swallowing to avoid tasting it.

I suppose the pendulum to my approach in eating has swung pretty far in both directions, and I suspect it will continue to change. Ideally there would be an easy 'one size fits all' solution to this gastronomical conundrum, and every other issue that causes concern while practicing along The Way, but for now I have decided to just trust my gut instinct.

*Tom Kowal has been a member of the Zen Center since 1999 and lives in Rochester.*



SanghaPalooza cooking class with Jay Thompson (far left).

### *SanghaPalooza!*

On the weekend of July 28–29, over forty Sangha members descended on Chapin Mill for the first annual festival known as SanghaPalooza. Described by one attendee as ‘summer camp for Buddhists,’ the weekend featured a talk on mindfulness in medicine, a figure drawing demonstration, a magic lantern show, hands-on workshops on cooking and *enso* painting, and bodywork sessions for fans of yoga, *t'ai chi*, and *chi gung*. In between all of the scheduled events, there were plenty of chances to converse over great meals, roast marshmallows, join in on Saturday night’s epic musical jam session ... and even sit zazen! All events were optional, so participants were free to cook up their own mix of entertainment, conviviality, and quiet relaxation. Participants were wildly enthusiastic about the weekend, so the Zen Center will be planning SanghaPalooza 2 for next summer—coming soon to a quarterly calendar near you!

### *Sangha Engagement Toronto Trip*

On Saturday, June 23, twenty members of the Rochester Sangha went on a weekend road trip to Toronto to see the Buddhist collection at the Royal Ontario Museum. An expert docent guided the group through the inspiring exhibition. Some of the participants took advantage of the opportunity to visit the museum’s new dinosaur exhibit and enjoy some Chinese dumplings at a local restaurant.

The Sangha Engagement Committee welcomes your ideas for next year’s road trip. If you have recommendations, please email Abbie Levin on behalf of the Sangha Engagement Committee at [abbie.levin@gmail.com](mailto:abbie.levin@gmail.com).

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## *Zen Bow*

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### Illness & Practice

Zen practice helps us to live with illness and the clarity, helplessness, anger, and weakness that accompanies it. The next issue of *Zen Bow* will explore how the experience of illness can serve as a catalyst for deepening one's practice.



Articles and images on any topic are always welcome and may be submitted at [zenbow@rzc.org](mailto:zenbow@rzc.org).

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