

Eating Meditation

This piece of bread is an ambassador from the entire cosmos.

Eating a meal together is a meditative practice. We should try to offer our presence for every meal. As we serve our food we can already begin practicing. Serving ourselves, we realize that many elements, such as the rain, sunshine, earth, air and love, have all come together to form this wonderful meal. In fact, through this food we see that the entire universe is supporting our existence.

We are aware of the whole sangha as we serve ourselves and we should take an amount of food that is good for us. Before eating, the bell will be invited for three sounds and we can enjoy breathing in and out while practicing the five contemplations.

- This food is a gift of the earth, the sky, numerous living beings and much hard work.
- May we eat with mindfulness and gratitude so as to be worthy to receive it.
- May we recognize and transform our unwholesome mental formations, especially our greed, and learn to eat with moderation.
- May we keep our compassion alive by eating in such a way that we reduce the suffering of living beings, preserve our planet and reverse the process of global warming.
- We accept this food so that we may nurture our brotherhood and sisterhood, strengthen our sangha and nourish our ideal of serving all beings.

We should take our time as we eat, chewing each mouthful at least 30 times, until the food becomes liquefied. This aids the digestive process. Let us enjoy every morsel of our food and the presence of the dharma brothers and sisters around us. Let us establish ourselves in the present moment, eating in such a way that solidity, joy and peace be possible during the time of eating.

Eating in silence, the food becomes real with our mindfulness and we are fully aware of its nourishment. In order to deepen our practice of mindful eating and support the peaceful atmosphere, we remain seated during this silent period. After twenty minutes of silent eating, two sounds of the bell will be invited. We may then start a mindful conversation with our friend or begin to get up from the table.

Upon finishing our meal, we take a few moments to notice that we have finished, our bowl is now empty and our hunger is satisfied. Gratitude fills us as we realize how fortunate we are to have had this nourishing food to eat, supporting us on the path of love and understanding.

From the Order of Thich Nhat Hanh