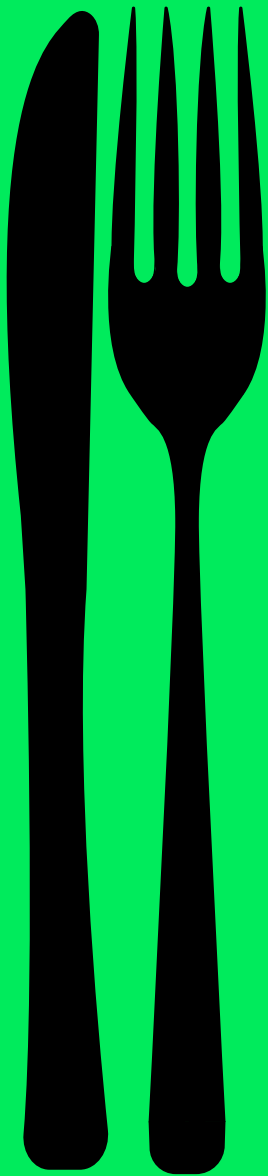


# ON THE TABLE:

LEXA WALSH



Meal Ticket

MIT List Visual  
Arts Center

## On the Table

Lexa Walsh  
Meal Ticket

Sharing a meal together is fundamental to the human experience and the development of culture. **Meal Ticket** brings together different individuals and groups for home-cooked meals and recipe exchanges that facilitate sometimes difficult conversation and community. A recipe is a set of instructions, not only for food, but also for life: a recipe for disaster, a painting medium, a marriage, for violent societal breakdown, for utopia... . The recipe exchange sparks storytelling about family, values, politics and culture.

When the recipes are compiled into community cookbooks, they create unique group identities, and an archive of our collective experience.

Community Cookbooks have a long legacy in the United States of identifying and celebrating communities, from museum docents to religious groups to the Junior League. They have often been used not only for fundraising, but also as collective memoirs of place and culture, not to mention often the only place women had been 'published'.

## On the Table

### How to perform Meal Ticket, or facilitate a curated meal, conversation and community cookbook.

Invite at least 8 and up to 100 thoughtful family, friends and acquaintances... preferably those that do now all know each other well. It should be an even number, which may or may not include you as facilitator.

Find a place, and think about how it can be made welcoming. Maybe it's your dining room, your back yard, or in a public park. Set a beautiful rectangular table that allows conversation across it. Do you have some pretty handmade ceramics? Mismatched linen napkins? Cut flowers from an abandoned lot? Plan to serve your meal family style, with platters to be passed among guests. Fresh and dried fruit are always welcome on the table as edible decor. Provide pens or colorful markers, bright enough to reproduce in a scanner/copier.

You may use the **attached recipe card** as a name card, or make your own, but be sure to have space for a recipe to be recorded. Set the table with seat assignments. Seat those who know each other least well across from each other. Try to avoid seating two very shy people across from each other. Alternately, you might not want to let a domineering personality sit across from someone who might shut down. It's up to you to experiment with dynamics.

Prepare a nice meal. It can be humble or decadent. Provide choices that accommodate guests food restrictions and allergies. If you're not a good cook, find one. If you bring in something store bought, keep it a secret. Serving a room temperature-friendly meal keeps it simple, and works well in summer. Grilling is a great way to reduce dishes. Don't forget the wine. A crisp, mineral-ly white and a medium bodied red should accommodate the heat. You can also make spritzes, with Prosecco, Aperol or vermouth, and sparkling water. Consider the ideal state is probably a light buzz, not getting guests wasted. Be sure to have some n/a choices too.

Play music that excites you, but won't drown out conversation during dinner. Later in the evening, singalong songs are always encouraged.

When all guests have arrived, have a drink, and are seated, please recite the **attached contract**. Alternately, write your own, which can address the set of community guidelines by which you will communicate and coexist during this temporary utopia.

Present the recipe exchange to your guests after they've started eating. Each duo sitting across from each other is a set of partners, "A" & "B". Partner A tells a recipe, a set of instructions for virtually anything to partner B across from them. A recipe can be not only for food, like Aunt Sally's pie, but also for a song, a coup, a pandemic, stopping gun violence, a utopia... . Partner B listens, interprets, and records the recipe on their recipe card through writing or drawing. Then they switch, and partner B shares a recipe with partner A. Then you let them all do what they do. Watch and listen. Delight in what conversations emerge, even if they are difficult. Feel free to facilitate and even nudge a bit when necessary. Ask guests to share a few recipes or ideas with the group once they are done with the exercise. Be sure to collect the recipe cards before guests leave.

Scan and/or print and bind the recipes into a Community Cookbook and share with your guests a few days or weeks later. You can do this on your scanner, computer and printer if you're handy that way, or bring it to a copy shop. **Share with us, too!\***

**To share, Send a PDF to [mealticketonthetable@gmail.com](mailto:mealticketonthetable@gmail.com) by August 31st, 2022 to receive a compiled cookbook by late September.**

In this space we are equals

We are all students and teachers

We collaborate

We share with trust

We listen with openness

We disagree with respect

We do no harm

We break the rules when necessary

And we know failure is always an option

MEAL TICKET

\_\_\_\_\_yep, that's me

\_\_\_\_\_told me this recipe