

Munch ON THIS



Community Bread

By Marcia Rae
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I can spend hours researching information for this column, reading and trying to understand how events in our world are affecting our community and the people who live here. But some things are not found on the internet or in books.

This last Saturday at the Brownsville Farmers Market we conducted a dot survey of four questions. One of them was, "how often does your 'family' sit down to a home-prepared meal together?" 67 out of the 107 respondents answered "almost nightly." Another 27 answered "two to three times per week." I was dumb-founded. That is 88%.

Oregon Bill in his most recent book, *Heart and Soul*, says this, "breaking bread together is a sacred act. . . . Most people come sit at the table as separate individuals. Community consciousness has to be nudged into existence. That nudging starts simply enough by taking off your apron and sitting down to join in the meal yourself. . . . You build the trust slowly and you build it across the dinner table talking one on one with someone who regards you as a friend, someone who knows you and knows you are interested in them as an individual."

In this town we gather as families, and small communities within the larger community – churches, the group that gathers around the big table at the Corner Café, the seniors at the senior center, even the baseball team at the annual team barbeque. We potluck. We gather and cook and bring our favorite dish, creating a superb meal – and creating so much more. Each person is connected to another, and that to another, until we are all connected, weaving a web of life that is our community.

Rhoda says that in seven years, all the atoms of our bodies have been replaced by new matter, and if you stay put in a home and in a community for seven years, your body will be made up of the matter of that community. Surely that is true if the food you are eating comes from local ground. But isn't it also true in some larger, metaphysical sense? When we stay put, when we put down roots, when we sit around the table with our family and friends and greater community, don't they become, literally, part of us as well – and we of them?

Community bread, local food, takes on a new meaning. You are what you eat takes on a new meaning. We fill ourselves up with food, and when that food comes from here, we are filling ourselves with connection and love. I become thou, literally. We are connected by the bread and the dirt that it comes from. Our atoms are crossed. What could be more profound or simpler than that?

Munch on This – The next time you break bread, look around.

PS – See you at the Farmers Market this Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon. Support your local farmer. Music is the Willamette Country Music Festival. Pick up some fruits and veggies at the Market and head out for a stomping good time.

PSS – We can get all gushy-eyed about our community, but don't let that spill beyond Brownsville to those other communities and forget that when it comes to bread, Brownsville rules. And to prove this point, we are hosting the Great Bread Bake-off, featuring locally grown and milled wheat from Stalford Seed Farms. In spite of trash talk from, yes, the MAYOR of Halsey and Irina Just of Scio (where is Scio anyway?), and even from Stand up Steve who pretends to be a Brownsvillian but is really from Crawdad Town upriver, we all know that the best bread comes from ovens right here in the best little community there is.

Neither bribes, nor booing crowds can sway our "impartial" panel of bread experts. All judging to be conducted in a fully fair and unbiased manner at the one and only Brownsville Farmers Market. Mark your calendar, September 18, for the first annual Great Bread Bake-off.

Think YOU have the best ever bread? Well now is your chance. Stop by the Community Booth at the Farmers Market and brag. We will add you to the growing list of bread braggarts. All bribes go to support the Calapooia Food Alliance, a firm and fair advocate of local food.