



Stories from the Kitchen- Recipes for Community

**Online Practice Period
Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community
May 1-28, 2023**

In the kitchen and around the table, we learn how to take care of our life, the community, and the gifts of the earth. Preparing, cooking, eating and cleaning up reveal our connections to all beings. This was not lost on Zen masters who saw kitchen practice as a central activity to a Zen life and an important instruction for living a life that matters. Kitchen practice builds a nourishing heart, selfless action, and caring attention. It is an essential form of service to the community and a deep expression of generosity.

Our home-based practice period, *Stories from the Kitchen: Recipes for Community*, is guided by the 13th Century Zen Teacher, Eihei Dogen's *Instructions to the Cook*. In this text, and the teachings it has inspired over the centuries, we are offered ways to understand how to use all of the ingredients of our life for The Supreme Meal. Nothing in our life is wasted. No ingredient in our communities and world is left out. Everything has a place and adds flavor. We hold each ingredient, humble or complex, as a precious gift. Focusing our attention on the preciousness of all of life, Dogen encourages those in the kitchen to see "water as your lifeblood," "the pot as your own head," and "to regard a grain of rice as if it was as precious as your own eyes."

During the practice period, we will study Dogen's *Instructions to the Head Cook*, as well as Roshi Bernie Glassman's book based on Dogen's instructions, the commentary by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi, and the writings of other teachers. In addition to daily sitting, weekly dharma talks and classes, we will also share recipes, cook, eat, and sip tea together. We will bear witness to farming and agriculture, food systems and food justice, and the labors and laborers who bring us this food. In practicing together, we will look into our own lives and see the ingredients we each bring to the Supreme Meal. At the end of the practice period, we may even compile a cookbook of our recipes for sharing.

Whether you are new to Zen or have been sitting meditation for a while, this practice period is a wonderful way to enter practice or deepen your understanding in a nourishing context. Practicing in this way supports you in:

- Entering Zen practice through mindful activities, like shopping, chopping, eating and cleaning up

- Bringing mindful awareness to food itself, food sources and the food industry, food justice and accessibility
- Allowing loving awareness to spread into the ordinary activities of life
- Learning how to prepare healthy food and practice healthy eating for yourself and your community
- Having a sense of how ancient Zen cooking practice might help us prepare a Supreme Meal today, feeding the hungry ghosts and nourishing all beings

Our culture has lost many of the opportunities to experience the joy of preparing meals together. This extended time of sheltering-in-place gives us an opportunity to reclaim a relationship to food, those who bring it to us, and the gifts of the earth. In sharing this meal, we raise the Bodhi mind, realizing the awakened way.

I further pray that in receiving this meal all your sufferings will be eliminated, and that you will be liberated, so that being joyously reborn you will play freely in the fields of the Pure Land. Raising the Bodhi Mind and practicing the Enlightened Way, you become the future Buddhas without any further regress. Those who realize the way first, please vow to liberate all others throughout all space and time.
Prayer for Raising the Bodhi Mind from Gate of Sweet Nectar

What is a Practice Period?

We are building on the tradition of a practice period, or *ango*. Historically, it is a time set aside for intentional together-practice – community building and deepening spiritual friendships. Its roots lie in the mendicant lifestyle of the first Buddhists. During the monsoon season, when traveling by foot was not safe or possible, the monks and nuns stopped to “shelter-in-place” at a temporary camping site for three months until the rains passed. During this period of sheltering, the sangha enjoyed shared teachings and storytelling, meals and chores, and spiritual practices. In stopping and paying attention to their lives, they deepened as individuals and as a community, and came to a better understanding of themselves in society. Having woven together their connection to one another in the Dharma, they left the *ango* when the rains passed, better equipped to continue their wandering life in the community more intimately and skillfully. Practice period continues to today as a central feature of Zen practice, and is required for priests and lay teachers who are affiliated with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association.

Structure of the Practice Period

The online program will last one month, beginning May 1st and ending May 28th. You may join for all or part of it to accommodate work and family responsibilities. Making a commitment to the practice is an important part of Zen training, so we ask that you fulfill the commitment you make to the community at the beginning of the period.

Each week, there will be meditation, Zen liturgy, dharma talks, discussion groups, and classes with teachers. In the spirit of Zen Peacemakers, we will integrate Peacemaker practices and

forms. There will be three bearing witness practices (you can choose how many to do), as well as a time for cooking and eating together, and teatime. Most activities will require that you join the community via zoom for real-time events; a few activities will be undertaken on your own schedule. We hope to create a structure that allows you to participate in ways that make sense for you.

Joshin Byrnes will lead the practice period. Eisho, Kendo, and Joshin will be offering individual practice discussions available to all participants.

Schedule (times are Eastern Daylight Time/EDT)

May 1 – Practice Period Opening Ceremony and Orientation 4:00-5:00 pm

May 3 – Dharma Talk 5:30-6:30 pm

May 4 – Class 3:30 to 5:00 Exploring Dogen’s *Tenzo Kyokun*

May 5 – Tea with a teacher (informal Dharma discussion) 4:00-5:00 pm

May 5 – Precepts Renewal Ceremony 5:30-6:30

May 6 – Half-Day Practice Intensive:

10:00-10:25 Sitting Meditation (Optional Meditation Instruction)

10:25-10:35 Walking Meditation

10:35-11:00 Sitting Meditation

11:00-11:10 Walking Meditation

11:10-11:35 Sitting Meditation

11:35-12:00 Liturgy Service

12:00-12:30 Silent Lunch Break/Rest

12:30-12:50 Dharma Talk

12:50-1:00 Walking Meditation

1:00-1:25 Sitting meditation

1:25-1:35 Walking Meditation

1:35-2:00 Sitting Meditation and End

May 7 – Bearing Witness/Day of Reflection 1; Council Circle 3:30-5:00 pm

May 10 – Dharma Talk 5:30

May 11 – Class 3:30-5:00 pm, How to Cook Your Life, Uchiyama

May 12 – Tea with a Teacher (informal Dharma discussion) 12:00-1:00pm

May 13 – Movie Night/Watch Party! Chef's Table Jeong Kwan (2017) 7:00 pm

May 14 – Bearing Witness Day of Reflection 2; Council Circle 3:30-5:00 pm

May 17 – Dharma Talk 5:30

May 18 – Class 3:30-5:00 Instructions to the Cook, Glassman

May 19 – Tea with a Teacher, 3:30-5:00

May 19 – Gate of Sweet Nectar 5:30-6:30 pm

May 20 – Cooking Together (Make your favorite dish!) 3:30- 5:00

May 20 – Distance Dinner (Eat/share the foods we cooked today) 6:30 pm-?

May 21 – Bearing Witness/Day of Reflection 3; Council Circle 3:30-5:00 pm

May 24 – Sesshin Begins/Dharma Talk 5:30

May 24-27 – Sesshin

May 27 – Sesshin Closing Council, 7:00 pm

May 28 – Practice Period Closing Ceremony, 10:00-11:30

May 28 – Movie and Distance Potluck. Watch Party from 4:00 -5:00: *High on the Hog* (2021); Distance Potluck 6:30-?

Study materials for this Practice Period

Required Readings

- *Instructions to the Cook: A Zen Master's Lessons in Living a Life that Matters.* Bernie Glassman and Rick Fields. 2013
- *How to Cook Your Life: From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment.* Kosho Uchiyama Roshi. 2005.

- *Practice Period Reader* (pdf will be distributed).

Movies for Reflection (links will be sent)

- A Place at the Table (2013)
- The Biggest Little Farm (2019)
- Chef's Table: Jeong Kwon (2017)*
- Cooking Your Life with Edward Espeie Brown
- High on the Hog (2021)*
- Instructions to the Cook documentary on Bernie Glassman
- Dolores: Rebel. Activist. Feminist. Mother. (2017)

*Scheduled during Practice Period

Bearing Witness Days

On three Sundays, Bearing Witness Days will **begin at 8:00 a.m.** with a group recitation of the Verse of Atonement and the Peacemaker Precepts and instructions for the day. It will **end with a Council at 3:30 pm** and the dedication of merit.

- 1) May 7. Bearing Witness to Your Community's Food Landscape:** What kinds of food stores are within 5 miles? Which ones do well? Who do they employ? What do you notice about who shops there? Are there neighborhoods near where you live that do not have supermarkets and fresh foods? Where do people shop there? What food do these stores sell? How are the prices there?
- 2) May 14. Bearing Witness to Farming and Agriculture:** How many farms are within 100 miles of where you live? Who owns them? What do they produce? Who works on them? What is their environmental impact? Can you visit them?
- 3) May 21. Bearing Witness to Restaurant Workers and the Restaurant Industry.** Which restaurants and diners are surviving during current restrictions? Who works there? How many people in your community were/are employed in the restaurant industry? Where does restaurant food come from? What happens to food waste?

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Practice Period Commitment

Flexibility: The Practice Period is here to meet your needs. We realize many of you are working from home, taking care of friends and family, and weathering the serious changes to your daily life. You are encouraged to participate as much as would benefit you.

Practice Interviews: We will be offering brief practice interviews via Zoom with Joshin, Kendo, and Eisho. Generally, the times for practice interviews will be between 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m. Eastern time. You will sign up for practice interviews via a weblink and you will be given a zoom number.

Generosity

The practice period is offered freely. However, we hope that you will be able to make a generous contribution to support Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community, its teachers, and the social action work of our community. Please give what you can afford, but as a general guideline, \$350 for the entire practice period or \$100 per week. Again, please do not hesitate to participate in the practice period if you cannot afford a financial contribution. You can give online or mail a check to: Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community, PO Box 818, Middlebury VT 05753