
Sharing Meals: Social aspects of eating and cooking together



Statuette Yami (Taïwan, 1970s).
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International Symposium - June 14th 2018

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Summary

Eating involves many other dimensions than just ingesting food. It is especially a social act, as it involves the social position and **relationships** of the individual in all of the included practices: supplying, cooking, dressing, ordering, ingesting, clearing, washing-up, managing left-overs, etc. Some moments in a day, the meals, are more specifically dedicated to eating with all these dimensions. Thus, all the choices regarding their organization have social implications. Especially, sharing these meals (including all the activities listed before) with other persons has important implications. Indeed, Eating Together is, for the human beings, a way of expressing special relationships - as it can be seen when the meal is used as a diplomatic tool. The term **commensality**, meaning literally "sharing the table", can be defined as the fact to eat together. It is interesting to see that it is often used as a substitute for conviviality, which expresses the **pleasure to be together and to discuss around a table**. It is true that eating together is often perceived as a good way of creating good social relationships, or even more to improve the quality of the diet. Yet, eating together can sometimes also be a difficult time, especially when it was not the person's choice. This symposium offers to explore these different dimensions associated with sharing meals.

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