

A MEAL FOR ALL SENSES/  
ALL TIMES

SALAD ///:.....///TOSS

EVERY INSTANT IS A MO-  
MENT TO REVERSE EXPEC-  
TATIONS

(Blindfolded taste of a blood orange  
or lay down and eat salad looking at  
the sky)

NEW RULES

LAUGHTER

SUN EVERYWHERE

MEAL PILLOWS OR  
DOUBLING IS A BEAUTIFUL  
MOVE

(Burrito Ravioli )

BEETS = MAGIC POTION

BE PRESENT + OPEN

HOSPITALITY HAS DIFFER-  
ENT ACTS/ALL LEVELS/THE  
PLAY IS MUTUAL

REPEAT

Thank you Helena!  
Binta

\*

I loved the potion that turned us  
into vegetarians.

I loved having that as a sort of com-  
mitment to what was to come  
and a transition into a world that  
the kids had defined. I read this as  
a way  
of turning ourselves over to their  
command.

One of my favorite moments was  
when Cyrus and Milo took the beet  
juice  
test and milo liked it and cyrus did  
not. Milo was saddened and there  
was this beautiful “liminal” (ann

walsh referred to it as this)  
moment between child and becom-  
ing adult.

I will hold this with me forever.

The whole experience was seamless  
and the amount of care and atten-  
tion to detail that went into  
it was evident! I appreciated all the  
details from the violinist greeting  
us to the design and colors of the  
various ceramic utensils down to the  
felt used instead of a blackboard.

i loved the salad tossing.

Some reflections.

I often think of “childhood” or  
“being young” as a radical space of  
“doing things wrong”.  
As a child you are graced the space  
to “do things wrong”. You are slowly  
(or maybe now more  
quickly) taught to do things right  
almost before you even get to do it  
“wrong”.

Questions:

I left feeling curious about the  
process in which you worked with  
the kids;  
Where was there tension?  
How did you navigate tensions and  
conflicting desires of the children?  
How did you steer them or not?  
Were there any fantasies that made  
you feel uncomfortable?

You mentioned some of the kids  
wanting to make weapons and  
having  
security guards at the door. I wonder  
how this was steered?  
I am curious how this could have  
been used as a way to talk about this  
very common/cross cultural desire of  
kids to make weapons and play war  
games.

Did any other desires like this  
emerge?  
I wondered what you hoped for with

this workshop and the resulting  
meal?

This is more of a questions for  
myself, but I often wonder about the  
use  
of “re” in terms of “re-imagine the  
experience of a meal” or “re-imagining  
farming” or re-etc.

Is it not enough to imagine? Have  
we lost the ability to imagine?

Lots more. I hope some of this will  
be of use.

xo

Amy

\*

Dear Helena,

On Saturday I kept trying to reach  
back to remember situations, scenar-  
ios, or imaginings that were defined  
entirely and 100% as child-con-  
ceived and kid-run. Somehow this  
landed me in friends’ basements  
with boxes of dress-up costumes  
and those little plastic trolls with the  
bright fake hair. And mud puddles  
under rusty swingsets. And trolls  
and costumes in the mud puddles.  
The dynamic within a group of  
children as they self-organize and  
imagine together.

I kept thinking about this because  
Saturday was an in-between world.  
Grown ups and kids. There are  
almost always some real parameters  
set out by the grown ups for the kid-  
run world: this backyard, that box of  
costumes, I’ll be home at 5:30, etc.  
but this was an especially interesting  
hybrid. Throw this salad down on  
that tablecloth now. Time for potion  
#2. Eight workshops or so. Make  
and present a meal. Etcetera.

With the understanding, of course,  
that there would not likely have  
been a meal at all in the impossible  
extreme scenario that this could  
really have been left entirely to the

kids. Still I wished for it several times. And wished I hadn't failed the beet-juice test that confirmed definitively my belonging to the world of adults. And wished I was better versed, these days, at sitting on a mat on the ground and eating with my hands (or just directly with my mouth) without feeling self-conscious. Maybe I'll get better at this again now that I have a little one coming into my life so soon. And maybe that wish I found myself wishing, to be running through the woods, climbing trees in a costume, whispering secrets, maybe I'll have occasion to do that again soon too. Still I guess the beet-juice test puts me squarely in my place, in that world, as a visiting participant (at best) or an interloper (at worst).

Thank you for inviting me! And thank you to the lovely kids for the food and service and imagination.

All best,  
Christina

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Dear Tanvi, Aiden, Sam, Rena, Viona, Talia and Felix,

i want to say thank you for offering me so many funny thoughts and delicious mouthfuls at your Upturned Table event on Saturday. was it a party? was it a performance? a lesson? a restaurant? you hosts and servers were so busy i bet you didn't get to observe too closely what was going on. so, i want to tell you about what i observed. it was all very special.

first, adults sometimes feel like fakers. like they are only just barely older and wiser than kids, and that it's a lot of responsibility to be responsible and behave like grown ups. so when the table is "upturned," and you guys are in charge of us, it can feel REALLY good!

when i arrived at the museum terrace and was greeted by Felix, i felt good in just that kind of way. pretty soon i was sitting on my butt and bleating like a goat. Felix had handed us all our event scores, and the first one we used was "USE SOUNDS BUT NOT WORDS." this was a great way to start because we adults got to know each other first as animals, babies and noisy machines. plus, the uniqueness and wonky beauty of all the tableware made it feel like anything could happen, anything could be served, and it would still be fun.

i really liked that the score packet didn't tell me anything about what i was going to eat. only what i was going to do, or might do, during the afternoon. the food part was a mystery! speaking of mystery, thanks for the potions, they always came just when we needed them, and who can resist a potion? did you guys come up with some transformations you thought the potions might provoke? i would like to know what you'd want to drink a potion for.

it turned out to be sunny and i chose to use my napkin as a sun hat. that way it also protected me from the lettuce, carrots, peas, and other delicious veggies falling on my head when we tossed the salad. a few radishes got in my shirt so i ate them later.

carrying the veggie-catch-tablecloth over to our table and eating the salad right off the cloth was raw and rough in a beautiful way. i became a goat again when we got the score cards to eat with no hands, and take food off other people's plates. my very most favorite instruction was to put salad in my teeth, which felt like having a raincoat in my mouth. Zane Vella wore his lettuce like fangs, and he looked great.

here's a little secret: when the second plate of ravioli came out, the burrito ravioli, somehow i ended up with a delicious one that had chocolate in it. some other guests at the table said "it must be Mole," but i KNEW it was chocolate. then when you served us dessert (chocolate ricotta ravioli) i realized what had happened: a rogue chocolate raviolo got into the burrito plate and i ate dessert for dinner. yay! that was my favorite one.

short little appearances by your spritely violin-playing entertainer were something every restaurant should have. i really do mean that seriously.

here are a few more thoughts before i close this letter: i wish i'd known all your names, although not knowing them made me think a lot about the dynamics of restaurants and service - how usually you treat someone differently when you know them by name. i was so delighted by your enthusiasm that i wanted to invite you all to join us at the table! i liked hearing a little bit of an argument between two kids about who had invented something we were eating or drinking because it made you all seem real. i would have been glad to be fed blindfolded.

thank you again for the wonderful experience.

your satisfied guest,  
Anne