



Mealtimes & Mothers

7pm, Monday 13th November 2023

TARA WIGLEY, EMILY SCOTT, SKYE MCALPINE,
AMY POON, THOMASINA MIERS

Food writers, chefs, cooks and mothers Tara Wigley, Emily Scott, Skye McAlpine, Amy Poon and Thomasina Miers will come together to discuss the expectations, emotions and realities around mothers and mealtimes.

From the moment of a child's conception, feeding him or her is the mother's responsibility. Within an hour of being born, they are – all being well – at their mother's breast. This intimate act, new mums are repeatedly told, is vital not just for the child's health, but for the bond between mother and baby, with breastfeeding stimulating the release of oxytocin, the famous 'love hormone'.

At no point in our lives is the feeling of love so synonymous with feeding; is the emotion so united to its physical expression; and from that point on, a mother's food is synonymous with a mother's love. At least, that's the ideal scenario, sold to pregnant woman, new mothers and society in general. The reality is rather less rosy.

There are countless women who struggle not just with breastfeeding, but with weaning, teething and feeding in general, from those early years right through to teenage-hood, when the table is often more of a battleground than somewhere to eat. Ultra-processed foods dominate British children's diets, thanks to smart marketing and convenience. Meanwhile, parenting amongst heterosexual parents is slowly becoming more equal.

Nevertheless, this romanticism around mothers and mealtimes remains – in some ways with sound justification, as for millennia, feeding the family has been women's sole responsibility and our most beloved dishes are the cumulative result of women handing their culinary knowledge down the maternal line.

For some women this historical and biological legacy is cause for celebration and pride; for others, it is a tyranny that results only in frustration and failure.

Today, in 2023, with women rightly pursuing independent lives and careers, how do we reconcile and interpret this connection between food and a mother's love?

19-23 Charlotte Street
London W1T 1RW
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