

Food – From sacred meal to lifestyle products to survival



Food and drink are basic necessities of life. They are also representations and expressions of social, cultural and religious systems. Food brings people together, but food also creates divisions. It is deeply rooted and intertwined in socio-political, mythical-symbolical, moral and religious frameworks. Food is much more than just fuel for the body; what we eat or not eat is shaped by culture and in turn shapes our identity. “Man is what he eats”, Ludwig Feuerbach’s famous quote aptly describes food culture as an identity marker.

Shared table manners and religious dietary rules define and bond social and faith communities; members of these groups derive part of their identity from them. Even in predominantly secular societies these connections between food and religion, or traces thereof, are still present. Globalisation has made a plethora of diverse and personal dietary choices available that complement and expand culture-specific traditions. As traditional religious customs preside less over the dinner table, other attitudes – substitutes of religion – tend to fill their seats. Additionally, current and looming ecological and economic crises pose urgent challenges and changes in terms of food consumption and customs.

Issue 4:2 (2021) of **LIMINA – Theological Perspectives from Graz** will trace the multifaceted links between food and religion, from a historic perspective to the present day. We invite scholars with a background in theology, science of religion, philosophy and cultural anthropology to provide nourishing input and establish an interdisciplinary and interreligious basis for the current societal debate.

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Suggestions of promising topics for a lively discussion include the following:

- Food and culture are two sides of the same coin in many world religions. The cycle of feast and fasting, indulgence and abstinence, still characterise faith communities today. Ritual meal practices – such as the Passover Seder, the Eucharist celebration or the Holy Communion, and the Feast of the Sacrifice – constitute a form of shared remembrance that connects the past to the present and the Divine to the cycle of life on earth. Often, these acts of commemoration also reflect on an (eschatological) vision of the future. What cultural transformation processes – from a religion-specific as well as interreligious perspective – can be observed here? How are food and drink talked about in the respective scriptures of the different faith communities? Do these (religious) meals exhibit inclusive or exclusive characteristics?
- Food can take on substitute religious elements and informs identity formation. Fasting and dieting have become en vogue in post-Christian and Western societies. However, there is also a rise in specifically diet-related health conditions, such as eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, etc.) or obesity. How can cultural sciences, ethics and theology contribute to the understanding of these phenomena?
- At the same time, economic globalisation shines a light on malnutrition and undernourishment affecting the Global South, a lack of adequate pay for agricultural products, but also attempts at creating economic models based on fair distribution of goods and fair prices, including for imported produce from other continents. In what way can religion and theology contribute to these discourses? What impact does the global economic disparity have on post-colonial theology?
- The wish and strive for integrity of creation (cf. Gen 1–2) emerges in discourses that otherwise have no apparent points of reference connected to Biblical texts. Issues of sustainability and calls for taking responsibility for creation are often interlinked. Increased awareness for the global impact of food production and distribution manifests itself in ethical discussions on meat consumption

and a rise in vegetarianism and veganism. What role do or can faith communities, theologies, religious-pedagogical and ethical concepts play in this context?

We are looking for topical and innovative scientific articles for our next issue of *LIMINA – Theological Perspectives from Graz*. Please submit your outline (max. 4,000 characters) to:

redaktion@limina-graz.eu

The final article should be approx. 40,000 characters. For more information about the journal, the peer review process and publication guidelines please visit:

<http://unipub.uni-graz.at/limina>

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