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“Pull up a chair, pour yourself a glass of wine, and enjoy the friendship and hospitality found around Niequist’s table....Niequist writes with vulnerability and honesty that make the reader hunger to be one of the friends and family members who grace her table.” —*Publishers Weekly*

Bestselling Author Shauna Niequist Pens a Love Letter to Life Around the Table—with Recipes

Surprising and sacred things happen around the dinner table, when we gather the people we love together over bread, wine, and perhaps dark chocolate sea salted toffee. Writer, popular blogger, and avid cook Shauna Niequist explores what’s really happening when we feed one another in her new book *Bread and Wine: A Love Letter to Life Around the Table with Recipes* (Zondervan, April 9, 2013).

“The most sacred moments, the ones in which I feel God’s presence most profoundly, when I feel the goodness of the world most arrestingly, take place at the table,” Niequist says.

While Niequist enjoys a good Steak au Poivre as much as the next person, she emphasizes that she’s not a professional cook, and that *Bread and Wine* is not a cookbook. She’s not a stickler or a purist about food—some of her most sacred meals have been eaten out of travel mugs or take-out cartons. “I don’t want you to change the way you eat, necessarily,” she says. “But I do want you to love what you eat, and to share food with people you love, and to gather people together, for frozen pizza or filet mignon, because I think the gathering is of great significance.”

Bread & Wine is a collection of essays about how we love, comfort, nourish, and simply enjoy each other’s company around the table. In stories about heartbreaking miscarriages and struggling to get pregnant, juggling family and career, making time for friends and neighbors, dealing with weight and the shame attached to it, and working to balance feasting and fasting, Niequist illustrates how we create friendship and community, and offer presence and gratitude, through food. Some chapters include:

- “What the Table is For” — describes a mini-themed gathering for an expectant friend, to celebrate the imminent birth of a “mini-man,” with a recipe for Mini Mac & Cheese.
- “Go-to Risotto”— tells how risotto became her go-to entertaining meal, with a delectable recipe for a basic risotto.
- “Feasting & Fasting”—shares her desire to find the middle ground: some feasting, some fasting. For the getting-in-balance days, a hearty, healthy lentil soup recipe.
- “Love & Enchiladas”—reflects on friendship and the warmth of a signature dish, with the recipe for her friend Annette’s special enchiladas.

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Niequist has found that the most transforming moments in her life have come about when she's chosen honesty and vulnerability instead of competition and comparison. She encourages readers to be brave, throw open their front doors, clear off their messy tables and feed people. "People aren't longing to be impressed, they're longing to feel like they're home," she says. "If you create a space full of love and character, they'll take off their shoes and curl up with gratitude, no matter how small, how undone, how odd."

"You can decide that every time you open your door it's an act of love, not performance or competition," she counsels.

With compassion for neophyte cooks and fumlbers—which she once was—she offers friendly advice and encouragement, and shares her own cooking misadventures. "Start where you are," she says. "I believe every person should be able to make the simple foods that feel familiar and comforting."

Niequist describes herself as a bread person, and a wine person, but most deeply, "a bread-and-wine-person." By this she means she is a Christian, "a person of the body and blood" who recognizes the two as food but also something much greater: the sacred and material at once. "We don't experience this intimate memory and celebration of Christ only at the altar, we experience it every time we are fed," she writes. "I want all the holiness of the Eucharist to spill out beyond church walls, into regular streets and sidewalks, into the hands of regular grubby people like you and me, onto our tables in our kitchens and dining rooms and backyards."

Inviting readers to join her at the table, Niequist offers an intimate, inspiring celebration of food shared with family, friends, neighbors, and friends-to-be. The book includes 29 recipes—such as Bacon-Wrapped Dates, Green Well Salad, Watermelon & Feta Salad, Winter White Bean Soup, Goat Cheese Scrambled Eggs, and Simplest Dark Chocolate Mousse—as well as tips on weeknight cooking, entertaining, sample menus, and a book club discussion and cooking guide.

Shauna Niequist is the author of *Cold Tangerines* and *Bittersweet*. She lives outside Chicago with her husband, Aaron, and their sons Henry and Mac, and blogs at www.shaunaniequist.com.

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