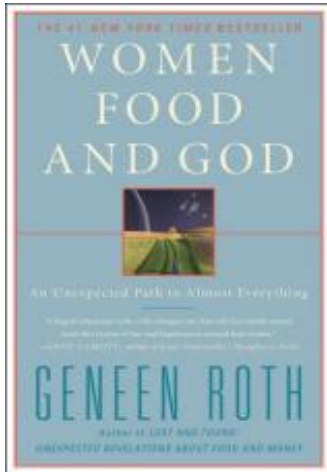


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# Women Food and God: An Unexpected Path to Almost Everything

by Geneen Roth

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## About the Book

No matter how sophisticated or wealthy or broke or enlightened you are, how you eat tells all.

After three decades of studying, teaching and writing about our compulsions with food, bestselling author Geneen Roth adds a powerful new dimension to her work in *Women Food and God*. She begins with her most basic concept: The way you eat is inseparable from your core beliefs about being alive. Your relationship with food is an exact mirror of your feelings about love, fear, anger, meaning, transformation and, yes, even God.

A timeless and seminal work, **Women Food and God** shows how going beyond the food and the feelings takes you deeper into realms of spirit and soul --- to the bright center of your own life.

## Discussion Guide

**1. Women Food and God** opens with "eighty hungry women" eating lunch together. Although the book is about our personal relationships to food, author Geneen Roth believes the book can be even more powerful when it is read and discussed with others. Why did you choose this book for your group's discussion? Make sure to discuss any questions or points in the book that you may have found confusing with your group.

**2.** Factors that contribute to compulsive eating include stress, loneliness, heartbreak, and unresolved issues from the past. Do any of these apply to you? Geneen Roth believes that "the relationship with food is only a microcosm for your relationship to the rest of your life" (page 199). Has reading **Women Food and God** opened up any doors to your own emotional state? Did reading the book make you more aware of events in your past that may be affecting the way you relate to food today? How?

3. According to researchers, 45 percent of American women are on a diet at any given time. How many diets have you tried? What does it mean to you when Roth writes, "Diets are the outpicturing of your belief that you have to atone for being yourself to be worthy of existing. They are not the source of this belief, they are only the expression of it." (page 83)? Discuss with your group how you have tried dieting to "atone for being yourself." What parts of yourself have you tried to deny or control by dieting? How has reading **Women Food and God** made you more aware of this behavior?
4. "When I first realized how simple it was to end the compulsion with food --- eat what your body wants when you're hungry, stop when you've had enough --- I felt as if I had popped out of life as I knew it and suddenly found myself in another galaxy" (page 161), says Roth. Why was this realization so life-altering for her? Have you put this idea into practice? If so, what has listening to your body revealed to you?
5. Roth writes that "freedom from obsession is not about something you do; it's about knowing who you are" (page 163). Discuss this definition of freedom with your group. Have you found it difficult to recognize who you are? Why?
6. What is Roth's definition of God, and how does it compare with your own? She writes that food and God "seem as unrelated as titanium computers and scarlet peonies" (pages 25-26). What is the link between the two? In what ways has **Women Food and God** given you insight into your spirituality?
7. Why do so many people believe that weight loss and appearance is the key to a happy life? How does our society, including the media and the multi-billion dollar diet industry, perpetuate this idea?
8. According to Roth, "The most difficult part of teaching people to respect and listen to their bodies is overcoming their conviction that there is nothing to respect" (page 64). Discuss this with your group --- how and why do you think women criticize each other and themselves? How does this contribute to a conflicted relationship with food?
9. What is the practice of inquiry? Why is it an essential part of overcoming food compulsions? Use this opportunity to practice inquiry with your group (see pages 207-210). What has the experience made you realize about yourself? What did you find challenging? Rewarding?
10. "The biggest obstacle to any kind of transformation is the voice that tells you it's impossible" (page 127), says Roth. How are we controlled by The Voice and, in turn, what can be done to silence it? For Roth, The Voice sounds like her mother. What guise does your own Voice take?
11. Read over the Eating Guidelines on page 211. Why does Roth see them as a spiritual practice? Discuss the Guidelines with your group. Do you find them difficult to put into practice? Why? Have they been helpful to you? How?
12. "People often tell me that my approach is too hard" (page 185), says Roth. It's hard to be aware and feel feelings. What has practicing awareness made you feel? In what ways has this been difficult and rewarding for you?
13. Roth introduces readers to women who have participated in her retreats, sharing some of the breakthrough moments they experienced. Discuss your own breakthrough moments with your group. How do these stories and scenarios help illustrate what Roth is conveying about food obsessions?
14. "Rest assured that like the butterfly that flutters its wings in one part of the world and causes a hurricane in another,

every time a woman aligns her eating with relaxation, every time she takes off her damn boots, the laces fly open for the rest of us" (page 170). Everyone has individual experiences and challenges, but how are women linked in the quest to overcome food obsessions and live fulfilling lives?

**15.** Think about the practices Geneen Roth writes about in **Women Food and God**. How have you been incorporating them in your own life? What sort of internal shifts have you been experiencing? Discuss a plan for the future with your group --- would you like to check in with one another on a regular basis to discuss how these practices are making you feel?

## Author Bio

Geneen Roth is the author of 10 books, including the *New York Times* bestsellers WHEN FOOD IS LOVE, LOST AND FOUND and WOMEN FOOD AND GOD, as well as THE CRAGGY HOLE IN MY HEART AND THE CAT WHO FIXED IT. She has been speaking, teaching groundbreaking workshops and offering retreats for over 30 years, and has appeared on numerous national shows, including "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "20/20," the "Today" show, "Good Morning America" and "The View." She lives in Northern California with charms of hummingbirds; her husband, Matt; and Izzy, the fabulous, eating-disordered dog.

Photo Credit: Carl Studna

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