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Author's Pilgrimage to Meet the Farmers, Artisans, and Bakers of Ancient Foods Shows Bible Is a Modern Culinary Manual, God is "First Foodie"

Bestselling author Margaret Feinberg embarked on a global quest to experience foods of the Bible, seeking out the people whose lives and livelihoods are intimately entwined with ancient fare. In her new book, ***Taste and See: Discovering God among Butchers, Bakers, and Fresh Food Makers*** (Zondervan, \$16.99 paper, January 22, 2019), she shows that the Bible is a modern culinary manual, and that God is the original foodie: a creator of food lush in flavor, rich in nutrients, and infused with sacred meaning. It's an eye-opening, mouth-watering, hands-on exploration of sustenance in an age of fast food and fads.

Feinberg focused on six foods that are featured prominently in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament:

- **Salt:** "Always craving salt and adventure," Feinberg descends 400 feet below ground into the frosty white caverns of a Utah salt mine where she uncovers "transcendent purpose in glimmering crystals." Salt, so common today, has a fascinating history. For most of human history it was a prized commodity, playing a key role in military enterprises of the Roman Empire, Napoleon, and even the U.S. Civil War, due to its importance in keeping troops healthy. Salt-centric recipes include Smoked Salt and Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Cookies.
- **Bread:** Baking matzo at Yale University with an expert on ancient bread, Feinberg delves into bread making as a communal endeavor, a stark contrast to how many of us obtain and consume it today. She includes recipes for 18-minute Matzo and Moroccan Barley Bread.
- **Olives:** On a remote island in Croatia, Feinberg helps harvest olives and cart them to an olive press. She sees firsthand the healing properties of olives, noticing the nearly flawless skin of women who use it as a moisturizer. And the oil contains oleocanthal, an anti-inflammatory which acts like ibuprofen. "Though olive oil isn't a magic potion," Feinberg says, "anointing people is a practice rooted deep in Scripture as an act of compassion." Olives and their oil are also delicious, of course, and Feinberg includes recipes for Basil Olive Oil Dip, along with Fig-Olive Tapenade.

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- **Fish:** In Israel, Feinberg joins a crew of fishermen on a skiff in the Sea of Galilee. They're seeking "St. Peter's Fish," a kind of tilapia that it gets its nickname from a popular story in the Gospel of Matthew. Recipes for Spicy Smoked Salmon Dip and Grilled Fish Tacos with Baja Slaw are among the treats in this chapter.
- **Figs:** During her visit to a fig farm in Madera, California, Feinberg encounters the fruit as a rich symbol of abundance and fruitfulness in life. Unlike most fruit trees, figs are multi-cropping—they are harvested numerous times each year. Recipes include Roasted Figs and Brussels Sprouts and Salted Caramel with Fig Sauce.
- **Lamb:** Feinberg meets "The Meat Apostle," a butcher in Texas who preaches ethical treatment of animals and warns of the environmental cost of cheap meat. Feinberg notes how ancient food laws from the Bible still shape modern food-handling practices. Recipes include Lamb Lollipops and Best Practices for a Charcuterie Board.

Food prepared with intention and curated with love can revive hearts and souls. "God wants to nourish our souls with transcendent joy, supernatural community, and divine presence," Feinberg says. Today, however, the primacy of convenience and consumerism makes it easy to miss out on these blessings. "Food really is God's love made delicious, nutritious, and restorative. Slow down and savor the delicate flavors and divine lessons," Feinberg counsels.

Feinberg wrote *Taste and See* as a spiritual travel and food guide. It's designed to ensure you never read the Bible the same way again—or eat bread or olives the same way, for that matter. In addition to scrumptious recipes, Feinberg includes "Table Discoveries," practical tips about selecting, preparing, and enjoying food; and "Around the Table," simple activities to share around the table after a meal.

Margaret Feinberg is a popular Bible teacher and speaker at churches and leading conferences such as Catalyst, Thrive, and Women of Joy. Her books, including *The Organic God*, *The Sacred Echo*, *Scouting the Divine*, *Wonderstruck*, *Fight Back With Joy*, and their corresponding Bible studies, have sold more than one million copies and received critical acclaim and extensive national media coverage from *CNN*, *Associated Press*, *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and more. Margaret lives in Salt Lake City, Utah with her husband, Leif, and their superpup, Hershey.

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Suggested Interview Questions for Margaret Feinberg, author of
Taste and See:
Discovering God among Butchers, Bakers, and Fresh Food Makers
(Zondervan, \$16.99 paper, January 22, 2019)

1. What inspired you to undertake this spiritual-culinary quest?
2. You sought out people whose lives and livelihoods are intimately entwined with the foods you were investigating. What did these farmers, miners, fishers, bakers, and butchers teach you about food?
3. What do you mean when you call God “the original foodie”?
4. You describe a meal with friends that was intentionally prepared and curated with love. How do meals like that nourish our souls?
5. How can we recapture the communal power of mealtimes?
6. How did you end up on a small boat in the Sea of Galilee with “four fishermen who don’t speak a lick of English and a fifth in his underwear”?
7. You traveled to Yale to spend time with an expert on ancient grains where you baked matzo in under 18 minutes. Tell us about that. Why does unleavened bread have to be baked in 18 minutes?
8. Bread-making was once an intensely communal act. How is our relationship with bread different today?
9. What did you learn on the fig farm about fruitfulness?
10. You describe the salt mine as dazzlingly beautiful. What was it like down there?
11. You helped harvest olives on a remote island in Croatia. Tell us about that experience.
12. What are some of the healing properties of olives?
13. One of the most colorful characters you met on your travels is “The Meat Apostle.” How did his views on ethical treatment of animals change your perspective on meat?
14. In *Taste and See*, you describe celebrating the Passover with a local family. What was that like? What did you learn from it?

Endorsements for *Taste and See* by Margaret Feinberg

In this rich and personal book, Margaret invites us to literally *taste* faith, and not only believe it. It is an invitation you don't want to refuse. A delectable, grace-filled, God-nurtured world awaits!

-Norman Wirzba

Associate Dean at Duke University and author of *Food and Faith*

Margaret is a storyteller who never ceases to see the beauty of the world around us. If you love God, good food, and life around the table, 'Taste and See' will take you on an unforgettable culinary journey through the Bible.

-Jennie Allen

Author of *Nothing to Prove*, Founder and Visionary of IF:Gathering

I love Jesus, food, and the Bible...not in that particular order, of course.....and if you do, too, then this is the most delicious book you'll read this year!

-Lisa Harper

Speaker and author of *The Sacrament of Happy*

Only once have I received a prayer request for a friend because she was traveling alone in Israel to master traditional fishing methods and in Croatia to hand-harvest olives! But these escapades typify Margaret Feinberg's research into biblical food—from fish to figs and bread to barbecue—all to nourish us with special spiritual fodder as well as memorable meals.

Deliciously written!

-Craig L. Blomberg

Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary

Like an expert chef reaching for only the finest ingredients, Margaret Feinberg seasons her prose with generous dashes of wit and wisdom, whetting our appetites for the bounty of knowledge and inspiration she dishes out, chapter after delicious chapter. Oh, the people she meets and the meals she eats and the places she goes! Inviting us to travel with her from California to Croatia, Texas to Connecticut, Utah to Israel, Margaret reveals how our healthy dependence on food parallels our deeper dependence on the One who provides what our hearts need most. Her writing style is warm, and her message compelling, as she encourages us to taste and see the goodness and richness of God. What a feast!

-Liz Curtis Higgs

Best-selling author of *Bad Girls of the Bible*