



The Thomas Jefferson Foundation thanks The New York Community Trust - The Peter G. Peterson Fund for its support of Monticello's development of content and programmatic initiatives to strengthen civic identity, discourse, and engagement with the ideas that have shaped democracy, both in the United States and around the world.



Let's Talk

Conversations about society, politics, and community shape life in the United States. Thomas Jefferson understood this, and hosted dinners known for stunning food and sparking conversation.

The United States has always been a work in progress, shaped by the many people who pitch in to help us live up to the ideals in the Declaration of Independence.

Your conversations are part of that story.

What is Civics?

It's the individual and communal actions through which we shape our shared future, from politics to society.

These activities are often thought about in terms of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (like voting), but we recognize that many groups were (and are) civically active long before they were granted citizenship in the United States.

MONTICELLO farm table



Want to try out some historic recipes? Follow this QR code to find print and video instructions for some of the foods served at Monticello.





How Feast of Reason Works

The goal is to have a conversation where you get to share your own ideas and learn about what your guests think. The goal here is not to convince anyone of your opinion!

Work through the questions, taking as much time as you wish. You can skip questions or add your own.



Use This Question if Things are Approaching a Boiling Point

It sounds like what you're sharing is really important to your sense of identity, and I'd like to pivot a little and ask: Is there a food that's important to your identity, or a particular food you eat to feel "at home?"



Make A Toast!

In 1824, American statesman Daniel Webster noted that Monticello dinners were "served in half Virginian, half French style, in good taste and abundance." To food and opinions, in good taste and abundance.

Thomas Jefferson famously said, "Knowledge is power, knowledge is safety, knowledge is happiness." May we use our knowledge to build power, safety, and happiness for all.



1. Introduce yourself and share:
 - Your name (if needed)
 - Where you're from
2. What is a food that you hated as a child but love now?
3. What is a joyful food memory for you?
4. What food do you think best represents your family, state, or country?
5. Is there a beloved recipe that has been passed down to you? Have you altered this recipe? Was this a contentious decision?
6. What does it mean to be a good citizen?
7. What are your hopes for your country? How do you think these hopes can be achieved?
8. What does the government owe us and vice versa? Does the government owe the same things to all people?
9. What did you hear from someone that you disagree with, but want to let simmer in your mind?
10. What did you hear from someone else that resonated with you?



1. Introduce yourself!
 - What is your name?
 - Where do you live?
2. What is a food you love, and why?
3. If you could make one family or school rule, what would it be?

Feel free to take this placemat with you to continue the conversation later!