

THE LESBIAN BAR PROJECT  
& ONETABLE SHABBAT PRESENT

THE  
SHABBAT  
DINNER  
GUIDE

ONETABLE  x



WELCOME  
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WELCOME  
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The Lesbian Bar Project aims to celebrate and preserve the remaining Lesbian Bars that exist in the United States. OneTable supports the mission of the Lesbian Bar Project because Shabbat is about community building, and the Shabbat dinner table is more than just a table — it is a platform for connection.

We believe what makes a bar uniquely Lesbian is its prioritization of creating space for people of marginalized genders; including women, non-binary folks, and trans men. As these spaces aim to be inclusive of all individuals across the diverse LGBTQIA+ community, the label “Lesbian” belongs to all people who feel that it empowers them. In the late 1980s, there were an estimated 200 Lesbian Bars across the country. Now there are thought to be just 22. These bars are disappearing at a staggering rate and we cannot afford to lose more of these vital establishments to the fallout of Covid-19. We hope to ensure the Bars not only survive but thrive in a post-pandemic landscape.

Without space, we lose power, validity, communal safety, and access to intergenerational dialogue. With the support of our community, we can make sure these bars receive not only the financial assistance they need but the reverence they deserve. When our history isn't protected, we must protect it ourselves.

Whether at a bar or a table, on a roof or in a park, virtually or in person, we are honored to be a part of sharing the Jewish practice of Shabbat with as broad an audience as possible. Come as you are, be who you are, and do so safely, supported by the rituals of the past and an invitation to create, to innovate, and to celebrate a radically kind, hospitable, and inclusive future.

# About This Guide

This guide is an invitation to a new kind of communal discourse. Will it feel different than your average dinner party? We hope so.

What is the purpose of intentional community and why is it important to create spaces around a table? And how does Shabbat lend itself to exactly that- intentional community building between all peoples. Within the queer community, lesbians and their identities historically have been overlooked, criticized, and disrespected. This stems from so much, but it is the inherent femininity/womanness wrapped up in a queer person that causes strife for those who do not understand the experience of women and queer people alike.

This Shabbat guide centers the lesbian experience. Everyone is welcome at the table. If you are interested in learning more or hosting an LGBTQIA+ Shabbat dinner of your own, check out the [OneTable Queer Shabbat Guide](#), and the [OneTable Pride Shabbat Guide](#). We have further resources for the lesbian community here.

## **HOST TIPS**

- Participation matters. One voice is not more valuable than another. Encourage everyone at the table to share their thoughts at least once.
- While the reflections questions are linked to Shabbat ritual, they are meant to be explored over the course of dinner, not as part of the rituals themselves. In other words... don't forget to eat.



**MAY THIS EXPERIENCE OPEN THE  
DOOR TO DEEPER CONNECTIONS AND  
NEW TRADITIONS. SHABBAT SHALOM!**

# When I Was Straight

BY JULIE MARIE WADE

I did not love women as I do now.  
I loved them with my eyes closed, my back turned.  
I loved them silent, & startled, & shy.

The world was a dreamless slumber party,  
sleeping bags like straitjackets spread out on  
the living room floor, my face pressed into a

slender pillow.

All night I woke to rain on the strangers' windows.  
No one remembered to leave a light on in the hall.  
Someone's father seemed always to be shaving.

When I stood up, I tried to tiptoe  
around the sleeping bodies, their long hair  
speckled with confetti, their faces blanched by the

porch-light moon.

I never knew exactly where the bathroom was.  
I tried to wake the host girl to ask her, but she was  
only one adrift in that sea of bodies. I was ashamed

to say they all looked the same to me, beautiful &  
untouchable as stars. It would be years before  
I learned to find anyone in the sumptuous,

terrifying dark.

# OPENING REFLECTION

One of the best ways to share ourselves is by sharing the people with whom we connect.

Invite each guest to introduce themselves by name and preferred pronouns, and answer the question:

## “Who are your people?”

### FOR EXAMPLE

My name is Cleo. I use she/they pronouns. My people are feminists, etymologists and activists, queer moms and ethical non-monogamists, first generation Americans, bluegrass fans and Jägermeister drinkers

### SCAN FOR TWO EXAMPLES



# CREATING LIGHT

IN JEWISH TRADITION, LIGHTING  
CANDLES AT SUNDOWN ON  
FRIDAY IS THE LAST ACT OF THE  
WORKWEEK, THE LITERAL  
SPARK THAT CARRIES US INTO  
THE WEEKEND.

# Bless

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ  
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק  
נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik  
ner shel Shabbat.*

Blessed is the Oneness that makes us holy  
through commandments and commands  
us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

To use a recording:



# Read

## EXCERPT, SPEECH TO THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON BY URVASHI VAID, APRIL 25, 1993

Hello lesbian and gay Americans. I am proud to stand before you as a lesbian today. With hearts full of love and the abiding faith in justice, we have come to Washington to speak to America. We have come to speak the truth of our lives and silence the liars. We have come to challenge the cowardly Congress to end its paralysis and exercise moral leadership. We have come to defend our honor and win our equality. But most of all we have come in peace and with courage to say, "America, this day marks the end from exile of the gay and lesbian people. We are banished no more. We wander the wilderness of despair no more. We are afraid no more. For on this day, with love in our hearts, we have come out, and we have come out across America to build a bridge of understanding, a bridge of progress, a bridge as solid as steel, a bridge to a land where no one suffers prejudice because of their sexual orientation, their race, their gender, their religion, or their human difference."

We call for the end of the world as we know it. We call for the end of racism and sexism and bigotry as we know it. For the end of violence and discrimination and homophobia as we know it. For the end of sexism as we know it. We stand for freedom as we have yet to know it, and we will not be denied.

Watch the full speech:





# Reflect

Light is work we all benefit from.  
Light allows us to see the world not as it is, but as it  
could be.

What is one thing you did this week that added  
light to the world?

# *BLESSING OURSELVES + OTHERS*

**IN JEWISH TRADITION, SHABBAT INCLUDES  
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENTS TO  
BLESS CHILDREN. AS INHERITORS OF THIS  
TRADITION WE ARE INVITED TO BLESS  
EACH OTHER AND OURSELVES IN A SPIRIT THAT  
WELCOMES ALL KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS.**

# Bless

Be who you are – and may you be blessed in all that you are.

— MARCIA FALK

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ  
יָאֵר יְהוָה פְּנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַיַּחֲנֵךְ  
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַיִּשֶׂם  
לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

*BYivarechecha Adonai v'yishmerecha*

*Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka*

*Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yasem lecha shalom*

May you be blessed and guarded

May you know favor and grace

May you receive kindness and peace

# Read

**AS A WOMAN, AS A LESBIAN, AS A JEW, I KNOW THAT MUCH OF WHAT I CALL HISTORY OTHERS WILL NOT. BUT ANSWERING THAT CHALLENGE OF EXCLUSION IS THE WORK OF A LIFETIME.**

**— JOAN NESTLE**

I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place that is so saturated with toxic that they didn't have a choice about getting leukemia. I want a president that had an abortion at sixteen and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a president who lost their lover to aids, who still sees that in their eyes every time they lay down to rest, who held their lover in their arms and knew they were dying. I want a president with no air conditioning, a president who has stood on line at the clinic, at the dmv, at the welfare office, and has been unemployed, laid off and sexually harassed and gay bashed and deported. I want someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them. I want a black woman for president. I want someone with bad teeth, someone who has eaten hospital food, someone who cross dresses and has done drugs, and been in therapy. I want someone who has committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss, and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.

**— ZOE LEONARD**

Watch An Artist Talk with Zoe Leonard and Eileen Myles:



# Reflect

I want a dyke for president.

Six powerful words that have become a part of the  
Lesbian canon.

Perhaps you have heard of Six Word Memoirs as  
an invitation to storytelling.

Take a few minutes to reflect and put  
together a six word blessing,  
a vision for the world. Whether a sentence,  
a statement, or a series of adjectives...

*What are the six words that describe  
the future you want to see?*

# SANCTIFYING TIME

**KIDDUSH, FROM THE HEBREW WORD KODESH,  
OR HOLY, CELEBRATES OUR ABILITY TO  
SANCTIFY TIME, TO SAY THAT THIS FRIDAY  
NIGHT, THIS SHABBAT DINNER, THIS EXACT  
MOMENT, WHICH HAS NEVER OCCURRED BEFORE  
AND NEVER WILL AGAIN, IS SPECIAL.**

The milestones of the lesbian experience mark the passage of time; it is a history that spans generations and we welcome its narratives around this Shabbat table. When we use wine as a conduit to sanctify time, we are blessing this moment, remembering that we are partners in both preserving and producing wonder, building a better world week after week, year after year.

# Bless

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי מְקַדֵּשׁ  
הַשַּׁבָּת

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'gafen.  
Baruch Atah Adonai m'kadesh ha'Shabbat.*

Blessed is the Oneness that creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed is the Oneness that sanctifies Shabbat.

To use a recording:



# Read

## ADAPTED FROM LESBIAN VISIBILITY WEEK

Lesbian visibility matters. It also crucially gives a platform to strong lesbian role models, whose stories make us all feel visible too. One thing I'm reminded of on this day is the common misconception that as a lesbian you are either 'butch' or 'femme' and never both or anything in between. This is not only frustrating, but can also be degrading and demeaning. These identities should obviously be celebrated, but not forced on people. When people know or presume your sexuality, they often take one look at you and decide which stereotype best fits. But I am not here to play a role for other people. I am not one thing. I am much more than that. We all are.

When I think about the world I want to live in, I think about the need for strong lesbian role models in all walks of life. Real people with complex and varied identities. Growing up, I had no one to reflect back who I was at school, in my community or on TV. This can make you feel your identity isn't valid. It made me hide. Today, my life is very different - I'm able to be myself, but I still want to see more lesbian role models and be seen as one too.

Young people will continue to go through the challenges of self-discovery and will always need to see a world in which their identities are represented and role models exist. They will need to feel valid and appreciated. It's so important to feel that you are part of a community. Feeling alone, like you are the only one, can be debilitating. You can stand up as a role model to help send the message to young people discovering their own identity that they are not alone.



# Reflect

Who are your Queer role models?

In what ways do serve as a role model to others?

# *NOURISHMENT*

**IN JEWISH TRADITION, BREAD IS A METAPHOR  
FOR LIFE. ITS INGREDIENTS ARE FOLDED  
TOGETHER JUST LIKE OUR RELATIONSHIPS—  
IF ONE IS MISSING THE EXPERIENCE IS  
INCOMPLETE.**

# Bless

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצֵיא  
לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam ha'motzi lechem  
min ha'aretz.*

Blessed is the Oneness that brings forth bread from the earth.

To use a recording:



# Read

Our journeys are circuitous; we followed bread crumbs to get here. Imagine all the people who had to come before us to drop those crumbs, to get us to where we are today. Some of them might be here around the table, others are no longer with us.

## **EXCERPT, THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES: OUR HERSTORY**

In 1972, a group of mostly gay women and men founded the Gay Academic Union (GAU). Dedicated to representing the concerns of Lesbian and gay students, teachers and workers, GAU also launched projects to ensure gay inclusion in course content. The Lesbian Herstory Archives was founded when group of women involved in the GAU realized that Lesbian history was disappearing as quickly as it was being made. A new concept was born—a grassroots Lesbian archives.

In 1974 a larger group of women started meeting on a regular basis to work out the deeper vision of this undertaking. The Archives found its home for the next fifteen years in Joan Nestle's apartment ... [along with] thousands of volunteers and visitors. The first ten years of the Archives built the trust of the communities it was serving. Venues ranged from living rooms where all present were sworn to secrecy, to women's festivals, gay church and synagogue gatherings, classrooms and bars.

Another person closely connected with the Archives was Mabel Hampton, a woman who lived her long life (1902-1986) in the African American Lesbian community. Mabel donated her extensive collection of 1950s Lesbian paperbacks and often came to volunteer nights. From the earliest days of the Archives, one night a week was devoted to volunteers working with the collection—groups of very different women spread out over the whole apartment filing, sorting, cataloguing, and opening mail. Many women came to volunteer nights just to hear Mabel tell her tales of drag balls in Harlem and her version of the wild parties of the Harlem Renaissance.

We purchased our new home in Park Slope, Brooklyn, in 1992 and officially opened it in June 1993. That trust we had talked about building in 1974 was there when we—all of us—needed it.

# Reflect

Share the name and story of someone whose trail you have followed, whose generosity of time or resources or love has helped you become who you are.

# GRATITUDE + NEXT STEPS

**RIGHTEOUS GIVING (TZEDAKAH) AND  
ACTS OF KINDNESS (CHESED) ARE EQUIVALENT  
TO ALL THE MITZVOT OF THE TORAH.**

—TALMUD YERUSHALMI, TRACTATE PEAH

At the end of the meal it is tempting to clear the table quickly. Tonight, let's linger over gratitude. May we feel connected to the past, the present, and the fullness of the future.

# Bless

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא מַלְכָּא  
דְּעַלְמָא מְרִיָּה דְּהָא  
פִּיתָא

*Brich rachamana malka d'alma marei d'hai pita.*

We are blessed with compassion by the Oneness that sustains us with bread.

Donate QR:



# Help us raise \$200,000 for our Bars!

The Lesbian Bar Project teamed up with Jägermeister's **#savethenight** Initiative and Executive Producers Lea DeLaria, The Katz Company, Mariam Adams, Amy Lesser, and Julia Ruiz Hoffman. In 2020, we released our PSA and launched a four-week fundraising effort. The campaign raised over \$117,000 for the bars.

Our twenty-minute documentary film dropped on June 3, 2021 and highlights bar owners, community activists, archivists, and patrons — their struggles during the pandemic, their hopes for the future, and why we must work to save these sacred spaces. We have concurrently launched another four-week fundraising effort for PRIDE month 2021.

**Now watch the documentary!**  
**The Lesbian Bar Project**

