



SETTING THE TABLE WITH

Gratitude



After a long week of work, a great practice to transition into Shabbat is to reflect on what we're grateful for from the week past. It's a way to honor the week, close that chapter, and enter into a new one: **Shabbat**.

Interestingly, the original Hebrew word for Jew is *Yehudi* which comes from the Hebrew word *Todah* or "thanks". Judaism regularly offers us an opportunity to walk with gratitude in our hearts and minds. In this guide we invite you to bring some thankfulness to your Friday night practice with new ritual meditations, conversations, and hands-on ideas.



Light

By striking a match, and cultivating light, you draw in the elevated energy of Shabbat. This initial Shabbat spark is an invitation for you to meditate on what aspects of Shabbat you are grateful to be honoring this week.

Consider the following questions for yourself + perhaps share these questions with your guests:

- Is there an element of Shabbat that most excites you?
- What Shabbat tradition or ritual is most meaningful to you and why?
- What are you most looking forward to in your Shabbat practice this week?
- What does gratitude mean to you this week?
- Who or what “lit up” your life this week?



Sanctify

Now let's take a step back and reflect on the week you are leaving behind as you step into Shabbat.

Pour a special beverage into your glass as you consider what events and emotions have filled your cup this past week. Of these events and emotions, which are you most thankful for? Perhaps it was something challenging or upsetting that taught you something new about yourself or those around you. Perhaps it was something joyous or someone who shined a light on your week.

Whatever your gratitude reflections are, imagine you are pouring them into your cup, adding a splash of character to your Shabbat beverage.

Now, whether you are saying the Shabbat blessing over your beverage or simply raising your glass as a toast, your full cup represents all the things of thanks that brought you here tonight.

Alternatively, consider delving into a meditation to help you remember all thing things that brought you to this moment, and all the small, but important things, to be grateful for.

Here are some meditations in [audio](#) and [text](#) versions to get you started.



Challah

Eating, according to the Jewish teaching, is a holy act.

It is a way of strengthening our bodies and minds so that we can continue to do good in this world. But how often, during our week, do we eat hurriedly, without taking a moment to be thankful for the nourishment in front of us, without noticing where our food came from, and giving thanks to the hands that prepared our meals? Consider expressing gratitude towards the farmworkers who devote endless time and energy to sustain the crops that feed us, with no promises of fruitful labor.

Now you have entered into the spacious sanctuary of Shabbat. Take this time to be mindful of your food--to elevate your food with joy, pleasure and thanks.

Here's a meditation in [audio](#) and [text](#) versions.

Not in the mood for a meditation? Consider asking yourself or your guests one of these questions to help bring your awareness to your body and to the food in front of you:

- Who made the food you are eating tonight?
- Is there a special story to the ingredients, dishes, or consideration to the hands that were influential in preparing them?
- What fuels and nourishes you beyond food? (time with friends, a long walk, music, etc)?
- Who was impacted by the food you're eating?
- Did the farmer hit a bump on the way to the market, bruising the bushel of peaches that are now sitting on your counter waiting to be served?



Thanks

Many faiths and cultures have grace before meals.

However, in Jewish tradition, we have grace after meals. The ritual of grace after meals isn't about expressing gratitude for the food itself, but for the food and a full feeling. To say grace therefore requires a sense of intention around the act of consumption, nourishment and feeling good as a result.

Now you have entered into the spacious sanctuary of Shabbat. Take this time to be mindful of your food--to elevate your food with joy, pleasure and thanks.

As a way of saying thanks for the meal you have just eaten, take a moment to close your eyes or find a soft gaze in front of you. Inhale deeply through your nose, open your mouth and exhale. Once more, inhale through your nose, exhale from your mouth.

As you continue to breathe, notice what your body feels like: do you feel energized from conversations with those around you? Do you feel quiet and contemplative after a solo meal? Do you feel too full or just full enough? What quality does your breath have: strong, soft, fast, slow?

With all of these reflections in your mind and body you are giving thanks to the meal you have just had; you are honoring the completion of your Friday night rituals from light to food to thanks. Take another deep breath in, with all of the gratitude filling up your body, and a breath out: releasing that appreciation into the world around you.

18 Conversation Starters

Our version of 18 questions that can act as conversation starters around gratitude.

Most of these conversation starters were compiled from the "50 Questions That Will Help You Feel Grateful and Good About Life" from Tiny Buddha and "The 36 Questions that Lead to Love" from The New York Times.

- 1) What gives you the most hope about the future?
- 2) How do you express gratitude?
- 3) What inspires you to better yourself?
- 4) What was the last thing that made you laugh out loud?
- 5) Share about one beautiful moment you have had in your life. Bring yourself back to the place, describe the setting, sounds, smells, etc.
- 6) What is one kind thing you have done for yourself recently?
- 7) Who is always there for you? How do you feel about them?
- 8) Who is someone who really listens to you when you talk? How does this person affect you?
- 9) What's the best thing that has happened to you today? This can be something that has affected you greatly. What is the "space" that it brings to your week?

18 Conversation Starters

- 10) Think about your talents and abilities. What do you like about them and have you used them recently?
- 11) Describe what has made you smile today.
- 12) What's the best thing about where you are living? Have you been able to spend time enjoying it?
- 13) What has improved in your life from the last year?
- 14) What is something that you have witnessed that has led you to feel grateful?
- 15) Share what kind of simple pleasures bring you joy.
- 16) What's something that you have easy access to that always improves your mood, and how has it improved your life?
- 17) What are some things you feel grateful for when you close your eyes?
- 18) When you think of gratitude, do you think about Shabbat and the "space" that it brings to your week?