

# Dinnerview: Amaranth Borsuk

written by Danielle Susi | August 19, 2020



[Amaranth Borsuk](#) is the author of the poetry collections *Pomegranate Eater* (Kore Press) and *Handiwork* (Slope Editions). She works at the intersection of print and digital media with an emphasis on artists' books, installation, and digital/print hybrids. Her collaborative books include *Abra* (1913 Press), an artists' book and iOS app created with Kate Durbin and Ian Hatcher; *As We Know* (Subito Press), an erasure collaboration with Andy Fitch; and *Between Page and Screen* (Siglio, SpringGun Press), a book of augmented-reality poems, created with Brad Bouse. Her recently published volume *The Book* (MIT press), is a concise introduction that bridges media studies, book arts, and book history. She teaches in the MFA in Creative Writing and Poetics at the University of Washington, Bothell and lives in Seattle.

Here, she talks about spoonfuls of peanut butter, watching her toddler encounter new foods, and a Mediterranean final meal.

## **On her all-time favorite meal:**

I think the current pandemic, coupled with being a parent, has so profoundly rewired me that it's hard for me to answer this question. Before my daughter was born, we'd eat out or take out pretty often. I did most of the cooking at home, and Brad, my partner, would make some special meals. Since we started sheltering in place back in March, Brad has taken on the lion's share of the cooking.

I love cooking and feeding others, something I inherited from my mother—who inherited it from her mother—and this shift has made me appreciate how palpable care-taking is when someone feeds you. When I sigh over something delicious—like the pea-shoot pesto he made the other day—he brushes it off and says “everything tastes better when it's made by someone else.” I still feel deeply grateful, even when it's something simple like bagels (chewy New York style, which thankfully we can now get in Seattle) and scrambled eggs.

Having a toddler has brought me back to a deep appreciation of simplicity. A really perfect piece of toast with a thin spread of avocado. A crisp, sweet slice of apple. A handful of bursting ripe blueberries (the thing I most look forward to each summer here). A thickly-spread peanut butter and

raspberry jam sandwich (secretly my favorite food). It sounds like such a cliché, but seeing her face as she experiences each of these things for the first time makes me savor them anew.

Her favorite food is oatmeal (also one of my favorites), and she loves it to an unreasonable extent—when she plays make-believe, it’s the answer to every question: What is the dog eating? *Oatmeal!* What should we call this fort? *Oatmeal!* Why is the fox crying? *Oatmeal!* What kind of pie should we make? *Oatmeal!* (we made oat squares). We’ve had oatmeal so often I’m ashamed to say I’m almost sick of it.

She is also obsessed with *Frog and Toad* right now, particularly with a story called “Ice Cream” in which Toad gets covered in melting ice cream while rushing through the forest to bring a chocolate cone to Frog on a sweltering summer day. How could she love this story without understanding what ice cream is? We had to eat some to give her an idea of what the commotion was about. Hearing her gleefully exclaim “more ice cream!” was pretty heart-melting for me.

**On what the light looks like during her favorite meal of the day:**

Dappled amber glow of sunrise through trees.

When we moved to Seattle, friends advised us *you pick your first Seattle apartment based on the location and your second based on the number of windows*. So we skipped straight to the windows and found a rental that has an attached sunroom, which is where we eat, even though you have to walk through the living room to get there from the kitchen. It’s worth it for that light falling across the table, touching our hands.

**On snacking while writing:**

I tend not to snack while I write because then I end up mostly snacking and not writing. Snacking can be a reward for after I have gotten something done, but that also has its drawbacks: anticipating a treat will cause me to spend time brainstorming what I should have instead of focusing on my work. When I am writing, I usually just drink water, seltzer, or tea, though for a while I liked to write very early, first thing in the morning, before caffeine, which gave me access to a useful fuzziness.

**On her go-to late-night snack:**

Peanut butter is my favorite food, so anything involving nut-butter: sliced apples or bananas, crackers, or homemade energy bites with nuts, seeds, and dried fruit. I am not ashamed to say I have eaten a spoonful of peanut butter straight from the jar, occasionally dipped into a handful of raisins.

**On her food quirks:**

I like my apple pie served in a bowl with milk (oat milk these days). I learned that from Brad, whose grandparents, Nebraskans who moved to California during the Great Depression, would have pie for breakfast this way. We have it for dessert, and everyone finds it strange until they try it.

If you haven't, you should!

**On her final meal request:**

My heritage is Polish, North African, Greek, and Jewish. My request is a Mediterranean-inflected meal with lots of small dishes shared family style with all the people I love in the world—whichever is alive and can make it. And hopefully the ghosts of those who are gone will be there too or not far away.

It will be a continuously-replenishing table that lasts from sunrise to just after sunset—one long meal at one long table in a grassy field, on a clear, warm day with low humidity and a light breeze. The meal will be punctuated by conversation, walks in the grass, time to hold one another, time to stare up at the clouds.

Whatever we are eating, there are hints of cardamom, rose, sesame, cumin, pistachio, mint, garlic. Each person will find their favorite dish or something that reminds them of it. For me there is shakshuka; hummus and pillowy warm pita; za'atar; olives; falafel; pickled vegetables; a fresh salad with cucumber, tomato, lemon, and olive oil; aromatic rice; delicately cooked and seared salmon; roasted vegetables; halloumi with honey; stuffed grape leaves; cooked beets and savory yogurt; nectarines, loquats, berries, figs, and nuts. And there is a bounty of sweet things including a dark chocolate avocado torte, tiny little pastries of all kinds, and coconut and date-sweetened ice cream.

No one gets sick. No one is hungry. No one is sad.