

# PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: RECIPE FOR CHANGE—AMPLIFYING BLACK WOMEN

October 4, 2022



Safe Food Committee Report

By Adam Rabiner

Typically *Plow to Plate* curated films reflect our committee's name and deal in one way or another with food safety. In last month's film, *The Pollinators*, one had to ask, how safe are the bees? Other times we may question, how safe is this ear of corn, or on a larger scale, how safe is our planet really?

This month's selection is also about safety, but in a different sense. In *Recipe for Change: Amplifying Black Women* we join three distinguished groups of influential Black women at separate dinner tables with different hosts eating delicious meals prepared by three distinct chefs. However, the conversation starters are uniform, and they prompt incredibly candid, honest, and at times painful discussions. The ease the guests feel in one another's company is palpable. I was reminded how good food and great company among friends provides comfort. While the conversations are incredibly serious, laughter and joy abound.

Mary J. Blige hosts Sara Jakes Roberts, Winnie Harlow, Chloe Bailey, Lynn Whitfield, and Roxane Gay. At another table, Saweetie is hostess to Kelis Rogers, Kelly Rowland, Angelica Ross, Hallease Narvaez, Elaine Welteroth, and Keisha Lance Bottoms. Finally, Tabitha Brown is mistress of ceremonies with Loni Love, Jackie Aina, Yaya DaCosta, Renee Montgomery, and Danielle Young. Everything about these meals is elegant, as if set for a fancy wedding or baby-shower. They are outdoors, on the rooftops of tall skyscrapers, at tables decorated with beautiful floral arrangements. The theme of each meal is "brunch at night." The women are dressed to the nines and in high spirits.

Before the women begin to share their stories, they bless the tables. After some delectable appetizers I cannot adequately describe due to the *Gazette's* article word limits, each host hands out scrolls with the first question, "Tell me you're Black without telling me you're Black." This prompt elicits a collective "ooooohhh" as those sitting around the table reveal a look or mannerism or expression such as "God is good," "We're living in the last days," "That's so real," that is met with recognition by the others. One guest strokes her braids and announces, "This is my hair, I bought it" to peals of laughter.

Scroll two asks, “What is your first reaction when you hear the phrase, ‘strong Black woman?’” After an initial silence, the thoughtful and earnest remarks concern the pressure inflicted by this stereotype. “We don’t get the luxury of being weak” was a common theme, “we are all strong.” This expression was viewed as dismissive, a negative stigma making it sound like “I don’t need you.” While the consensus was that “It’s in our blood, we are strong, we have to be,” yet the feeling also was that Black women, like everyone else, also need at times to be frail and vulnerable and treated as individuals, to be weak, held, have others have their backs. “Don’t call me strong and don’t call me Black. Call me pretty, fulfilled, aspirational, inspirational.” In other words, the trope is a compliment, “but it can break you, it takes a toll. You never hear the expression, “‘strong, white, woman’... ‘strong Asian woman’ you don’t hear it.”

Other prompts included “How much history about Black women did you learn in school?”; “What is a look or saying that your mom used to give you to tell you to get yourself together?”; “How does the media shape your perception of Black Women?”; “What does showing up for Black women look like in 2022?”; “What were you taught that you need to unlearn about Black women?” There are more. “Tell us about your experiences with colorism, texturism, and featurism throughout your life”; “What has your experience been when it comes to mental health support?”; “How has your mother shaped you on how you show love?”; “How has code-switching affected you in your life?”; and finally, “Black women are often imitated. What’s your favorite thing about being a Black woman?”

These are all excellent questions, and the thoughtful and earnest answers are fascinating. After dessert the guests, and even the production crew, were asked to write down on a piece of paper an affirmation which was collected and made into a quilt. *Recipe for Change: Amplifying Black Women* is a reminder of why food need not always be a danger or warning but can also be a cause for celebration.

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*Recipe for Change: Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m.*

Screening link: <http://www.plowtoplatefilms.com/events/>