

## Unrepresented Women: A Personal Reflection

At countless family and neighborhood dinners, I've noticed a tradition that bothers me deeply. When it's time to eat, the men are invited to sit first and enjoy the food. The women, often accompanied by young children if they're still small, serve the meal and then gather in another room to chat while the men eat. The young boys join the older men, while the women either stay in the kitchen or huddle together elsewhere. Only after the men finish their meal and move on to their conversations do the women finally get their turn at the table. By then, the food is often cold, and they sometimes reheat it or just eat it as it is. The female host usually eats last.

This custom might seem logical at first glance: the female host is responsible for the meal, and the male host for hospitality, so he eats first. But why do the female guests also have to eat last? Perhaps they want to eat together with the host, or maybe they're not comfortable dining with the men, especially in cultures where there's a strict separation between genders.

These traditions likely date back to times when men did the hard work of gathering food and hunting. After returning home exhausted, it made sense for them to be served first. In groups, men took on the responsibility of protecting their homes from external threats, and thus received care and affection from the women when they returned.

However, society has progressed, and gender roles have evolved. Many men now help with kitchen chores, even after a long day at work. Women, even those who stay home, expect their husbands to participate in preparing meals. And once everyone has eaten, husbands are often expected to help with washing dishes.

But during group dinners with multiple families, the old traditions persist. It's surprising that men who usually help in the kitchen revert to eating first with other men during these gatherings. Even more surprising is that no one, especially the women, seems to question this.

As I reflect more deeply on these experiences, I realize that it's not just about the act of eating first or last—it's about respect and recognition. By serving men first and relegating women to the background, these traditions reinforce a hierarchy that undervalues women's contributions. Women work hard to prepare these meals, and they deserve to be acknowledged and appreciated, not just in private but also in social settings.

In our everyday lives, many of us are already challenging these outdated norms. I see men who cook, clean, and share the load equally with their partners. This change is significant and should be extended to our social gatherings. When I see my father helping my mother in the kitchen, it gives me hope that things are changing. But the true test comes during these larger family gatherings where tradition holds strong.

One way to start making a difference is by simply talking about it. Open discussions about these traditions can lead to greater awareness and, eventually, change. We can question why things are done a certain way and explore how we can do them differently. Small changes, like men and women eating together or men serving the food, can make a big impact.

When I imagine my future, I see a household where my wife and I share responsibilities equally. I envision us setting an example for our children, showing them that respect and equality are fundamental values. I hope that by waiting to eat with my wife, serving her, and ensuring she feels valued, I can create a small ripple that contributes to a larger wave of change.

Ultimately, it's about more than just changing who eats first. It's about building a culture of mutual respect, where everyone's efforts are recognized and appreciated. By starting with our own actions and setting examples in our homes, we can slowly but surely influence the broader social structure. And while it might seem like a small step, it can lead to a significant shift in how we view and treat each other.

So, even though I'm still young, I hold on to this vision for the future. I hope that I can stand by my word and create a home where respect and equality thrive. And maybe, just maybe, others will follow suit, leading to a more inclusive and fair society for all.