

Talk With Your Mouth Full

Chicago group hosts bi-weekly diverse dinner parties

By [WENDY WOLLENBERG](#)

We've all (hopefully) been to dinner parties where the conversation flowed, the food awakened our taste buds and we made new friends. It's that type of atmosphere a new Chicago-based nonprofit organization, Across the Table, strives to create with its biweekly dinner parties.

You can sign up for an individual event (\$30) or a series of dinners (\$80). Each event is limited to ten people, who are chosen on a first-come, first-served basis, for a three-course vegetarian meal and a chosen topic of conversation. Founder Lauren Grossman develops an overarching theme along with approximately 20 questions that touch upon race, religion, identity and community, and then lets the group guide the evening.

"Sometimes I'll only get to ask three questions from my list because the conversation just takes off," Grossman says.

The dinners take place at restaurants across the city in order to mix up the cuisine and allow the diners to experience different neighborhoods. Grossman tries to find restaurants with private rooms so that everyone can hear the conversation and feel like they can open up about personal topics.

Upcoming Across the Table events include Indian food and the role of friendships in Wicker Park on Aug. 24, Community Conversations in Hyde Park on Sept. 9. and a brunch event catered by Monogramme Events at Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art on Saturday, Sept. 12.