



the conversation project

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Top Chefs Help Break Bread & Taboos Dining and Discussing Death in the New Year

Seven Days, Two Organizations and One Conversation: A Movement to Encourage Meaningful Conversations about End-of-Life Care. Jan. 1-7

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. & SEATTLE, Wash. | Death as dinner conversation? You bet. Death Over Dinner and The Conversation Project are teaming up for a second consecutive year to launch a nationwide movement to encourage Americans to throw the most important dinner parties they'll ever have.

The two likeminded public engagement campaigns, both of which educate people on the value of making decisions about their wishes for end-of-life care and expressing them to their loved ones, are inspiring a series of uplifting and interactive dinners to transform the seemingly difficult conversation about death into an intimate, shared experience.

During the week of Jan. 1 – 7, 2015 **Seven Days, Two Organizations and One Conversation (#721)** will encourage Americans to pick a date on which to fill their tables with comfort food, family, and friends and start talking about how they want to live the last days of their lives.

Both organizations believe that conversations about end-of-life care shouldn't start with doctors, insurance agents, or in intensive care units when people are overwhelmed; they should start with family and friends while breaking bread. #721 provides the tools and tips to get the conversation started. Dinner party hosts choose the guests and the menu and let the wine and conversations flow.

To whet the appetite for the conversation, this year's side dish is an ecookbook, "**The Endless Table,**" *recipes from departed loved ones*, available for download just in time for the holidays. Famous foodies like **Tom Colicchio, Ina Garten, Ben Ford, Jasper White, Jody Adams, José Andrés, Roger Berkowitz, Michel Nischan** and many more have donated recipes in honor of loved ones, along with stories about why the dish they chose is personally meaningful. The book will be available December 2014 for a nominal donation of \$15, which will benefit both public engagement campaigns, The Conversation Project and Death Over Dinner.

"Memories and menus are bound together in our emotional makeup -- whether it's the hot dog at Fenway Park or the iconic turkey at Thanksgiving -- we associate food with the people we love and those we have lost," says Ellen Goodman, Pulitzer Prize Winning journalist and founder of The Conversation Project. "We hope people will celebrate life while talking about death. We know one conversation can make all the difference and good food and wine can make any topic more palatable."



Materials provided by #721 include [The Conversation's Project's Starter Kit](#), a step-by-step guide developed to help people have “the conversation” about their preferences for end of life care. The guide is designed to be used by families, or by individuals, as a way to help them think about and communicate important end of life decisions. From how much information the doctor should share with the family, to which family member is to be the primary decision maker, the starter kit helps people think about situations and how they might address them.

“We hope those who join 721’s national dinner party remember their loved ones who have cooked for them by singing their praises and sharing their wisdom,” says Michael Hebb, founder of Death Over Dinner. “Let’s all have this conversation and delve deeply into what it means to feast together. And, let’s live lives that people will celebrate after we have gone.”

Death Over Dinner works to bring people to the dinner table to create social change with the idea that dinners result in action and create deep engagement and profound relationships with participants. To date, Death Over Dinner has been the impetus for thousands of dinners held across the nation and abroad.

Last year more than 1,500 #721 dinners were held throughout the U.S. and the campaign drove more than 20,000 people to the organizations’ websites where they registered to host dinners and downloaded The Conversation Project’s [Starter Kit](#).

Ninety percent of Americans say it’s important to talk about their end-of-life care wishes, yet 30 percent of people actually have that conversation. #721 is committed to changing our national culture from not talking about end-of-life care to talking about it – in thousands of kitchens, living rooms, coffee shops and restaurants across the country. For more information about #721, visit deathoverdinner.org or theconversationproject.org.

About The Conversation Project

[The Conversation Project](#), co-founded by Pulitzer Prize-winner Ellen Goodman, launched in collaboration with the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#) (IHI,) and supported by Cambia Health Foundation, is a public engagement campaign with a goal that is both simple and transformative: *to have every person’s end-of-life wishes expressed and respected*. Too many people die in a manner they would not choose and too many of their loved ones are left feeling bereaved, guilty, and uncertain. The Conversation Project offers people the tools, guidance, and resources they need to process their final desires for their life and begin talking with their loved ones, in a comfortable setting, about their wishes and preferences. Have you had The Conversation? Learn more at: www.theconversationproject.org.

About Death Over Dinner

Deathoverdinner.org is an interactive website and cultural movement dedicated to giving people the permission and the tools to powerfully discuss end of life with their friends and loved ones. Created by Michael Hebb and developed at the University Of Washington Masters Of Communication Department in collaboration with interactive firm CIVILIZATION, Deathoverdinner.org has already inspired over 40,000 people to break bread and explore the many aspects of mortality, ageing, and the choices we face at the end of our lives.

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