

KATE BERNADETTE BENEDICT

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Instructions for the Monastery Cook

Meager, yes. A few onions left in the cellar,  
a rutabaga, a sprouting potato or yam  
and the few eggs under your skinny hens  
lie frozen in the straw.

Do not complain, keep joyful mind.

Even day-old bread

is destined for transubstantiation.

And when, at bounteous harvest, the larder is full,  
do not exult, do not squander.

Be gentle with the lettuce leaf; is it not a holy skin?

Press each apple as if it held the orchard's ultimate juice.

Take care with utensils.

Your stone mortar is no less a chalice  
than the gold vessel in the tabernacle.

Take care with your attention.

However mundane the task,  
cast your inner eye on heaven.

Be patient when the pudding curdles  
or the novice coughs his phlegm into the soup.

He will learn a proper reverence in time  
as you have learned it,

as kneading, measuring,

mincing, stirring,

you continue to learn it.



## ABOUT KATE BERNADETTE BENEDICT

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Kate Bernadette Benedict is the author of *Here From Away* (CW Books 2003), *In Company* (CW Books 2011), and *Earthly Use: New and Selected Poems* (Umbrella Editions 2015). Her work has been published in *The Raintown Review*, *The Cider Press Review*, *Ouroboros*, *Switched-on Gutenberg*, and *Unsplendid*. For six years she edited the poetry journals *Umbrella* and *Tilt-a-Whirl*. She lives in Riverdale, New York, and maintains a website at [www.katebenedict.com](http://www.katebenedict.com).

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