

*Ritual and Symbol have become central aspects of the burgeoning men's movement. Mick Cooper, Grand High Chick-Pea of the National Lodge of Men Who Eat Hummus, reveals...*

## *The Way of the Hummus*

**I**t was when the bonding and the intimacy in our men's group began to break down that we saw the need for a symbol. We needed something that would represent our interconnectedness, our unity as a group of strong, grounded, powerful, nurturing men. Mark had drawn a dandelion—strong and erect—but we felt the need for something shared; something which expressed our continuity and could pull us together in times of difficulties. It was John who first mentioned that the one constancy in our group had been the tubs of hummus, appearing with synchronistic regularity at each meet's shared meal. Neil spoke that the brownness of the hummus reflected our earthiness as men; whilst the rich texture seemed to symbolise our intimacy, trust and bonding. For me, the roundness of the hummus tubs seemed to resemble Jung's mandalas—especially when someone placed an olive in each eighth. Peter spoke that the savouriness of the hummus represented our strength as men, whilst the slightly lemony aftertaste reminded him of the bitterness of men's tears.

**A**round our symbolic tub of Hummus (we choose to use the capitalized 'H') we began to develop rituals. Each meet would begin with 'The Breaking of the Hummus Seals'. Then, we would metamorphosise our Hummus tubs into drums, beating a solemn rhythm as we chanted: 'H-u-m-m-u-s, H-u-m-m-u-s, H-u-m-m-u-s, at just sixty-five pence a tub, H-u-m-m-u-s, H-u-m-m-u-s, H-u-m-m-u-s.' At the end of each group, Peter would perform The Reading of the Hummus, foretelling our futures by the lines of Hummus left on each man's plate.

**W**hen we decided to divide our group into clans, the Hummus played a central role. Neil and Peter—delicate, gentle and sensitive—formed 'The Holland and Barrett Hummus Clan'; whilst John and Mick—fiery, rough and tasteless at times—bonded together into the Brotherhood of the Happy Shopper Hummus. Mark, the individualist of the group, wanted to form his own clan—The Spirit of the Grilled Haloumi—but his revisionist tendencies brought forth anger and grief from the other men. 'For it is only in the darkness of own Hummus tubs that we shall find the shadowy recesses of Men's souls,' spoke Neil. 'And besides which, how come you're always thirty bloody minutes late every time the meeting's at my house?'

**T**ogether, we became 'The Grand Lodge of Men Who Eat Hummus'—celebrating, sharing and feasting on our sacred broth. But one evening, watching in horror as our Hummus tubs

melted in the sweat lodge, we saw the error of our path. True, we were Men Who Ate Hummus, but it was the Hummus of the supermarket—bland, mass-produced, and de-personalised. Was this the masculinity we searched for, or did we desire a return to the masculinity of natural man: Man the Warrior, Man the Survivor, MAN THE HUMMUS-MAKER?

**W**e knew it was time to leave the superficial, hedonistic heights of industrialised man and return to the beginning—to our Hummus Work. And, as we learnt the alchemy of Hummus production, so we saw our own individuation process mirrored therein. In the soaking of the chick peas we saw the cleansing of our souls and the softening of our masculine shells, and in the mashing of the chick peas we discovered our coming together and binding as men. From a place of I-it, we had developed I-Hummus relationships.

**A**nd as we created the Hummus, so we discovered metaphors to describe our own journeys. When a man came to the group isolated and alone, for instance, we would say that he 'lacked tahini'; whilst a man overwhelmed with bitterness was said to contain 'a teaspoon too much of lemon juice'.

**T**he Hummus also served as a mean of initiation. Should a man want to join our group we had prepared 'The Hummus Run'—by which the initiate was commanded to carry two sackfuls of raw chick peas from the wholefood shop to the Lodge. Only then could he take hold of the Hummus Spoon and speak his mind (it is a rule of our group that one can only speak when holding the Hummus Spoon.) As of yet, no man has actually asked to join our group, yet we are prepared. THE HUMMUS RUN AWAITS.

**U**nlike many men's groups, whose personal growth work can become chronically introspective and self-focused, we saw the need for intense political activity. Forming the 'national Lobby of Men who Eat hummus' (LeMen), we began to raid supermarkets, breaking open the seals of the Hummus tubs and freeing the spirit of mass-market man. We have also begun to run workshops on 'Hummosexual Liberation', and, with The Knightly Order of the Garlic Bread, are hoping to run 'Men, Masculinity and Hors d'Ouevre' weekends. All are invited to attend, AND LET THE HUMMUS RUN FREE!