



# Contributors

## What a Difference!

Four writers and a TV host discuss the power of transformation.



**SARA CANN**

Assistant editor,  
Fast Company

**"The Fridge Diet"**  
page 122



**My all-time-favorite makeover is...**my mom's fix-it paint job in my childhood bedroom, changing fluorescent orange to a sunset tone. **I'd love to transform...** my cluttered, Post-it-covered office. **But I'd never change...** my values. **The one thing that makes everything better is...** my dog's goofy smile. **Nature's most magical transformation is...** the reds, oranges, and yellows of leaves in fall.



**AMANDA MACMILLAN**  
Writer

**"An Eco-Painting Primer"**  
page 82



**My all-time-favorite makeover is...**my friend's career swap. She quit her stressful editing job to surf and become a photographer. **I'd love to transform...** the United States healthcare system. **But I'd never change...** my weekend routine, including my early-morning romp in the park with my husband and our bulldog. **The one thing that makes everything better is...** mint chocolate chip ice cream. **Nature's most magical transformation is...** erosion—canyons and even a sandy beach are the beautiful work of water and time.



**ALYSSA SCHWARTZ**  
Writer

**"Table for One"**  
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**My all-time-favorite makeover is...**the High Line, a New York City park built on a historic elevated freight rail line. **I'd love to transform...** the way strangers interact with each other. Let's bring back niceties like smiling and saying, "Good morning." **But I'd never change...** my auburn hair. **The one thing that makes everything better is...**humor. **Nature's most magical transformation is...** spring.



**ALESSANDRA FORESTO**

O associate beauty editor

**"Inside Job"**  
page 174



**My all-time-favorite makeover is...**the one Karla Gonzalez, O's executive assistant to the editor in chief, got for this month's beauty story. I saw her personality blossom—it was the best result I could have asked for. **I'd love to transform...** airplane seats. I'm 5'1", and even I find them to be a tight fit. **But I'd never change...** my family, husband, and close friends. **The one thing that makes everything better is...**ketchup. **Nature's most magical transformation is...** the ripening of fruits and vegetables.



**TED ALLEN**

Host of *Chopped* and author of *In My Kitchen*

**"Transform My Weeknight Dinners"**  
page 161



**My all-time-favorite makeover is...**my Brooklyn brownstone. My partner, Barry, just finished redesigning it—the kitchen is now the perfect place to cook. **I'd love to transform...** Fox News Channel. **But I'd never change...** National Public Radio. **The one thing that makes everything better is...** cooking a great meal with friends and family. **Nature's most magical transformation is...** a hive of bees turning nectar into honey. 



works  
for me

## Table for One

Alyssa Schwartz celebrates the singular joy of dining alone.

ONE DELIGHTFUL evening while traveling last fall, I took a seat at the bar of a gastropub on Vancouver Island, off the western coast of Canada. Sipping a local Cabernet, I chatted with my dining partners, swapping stories and debating politics and, after the meal, sharing handmade truffles. It was a lot like being at a dinner party, except that my companions weren't old friends. They were the waitress, bartender,

and another patron two stools over—all of whom I'd just met.

Once upon a time, I'd have spent that night in the company of cable TV and a room-service tray. Like most people, I'd always considered restaurants to be social destinations as much as culinary ones; without company, it simply wouldn't have occurred to me to go out to eat. But if there's one thing I've learned working as a travel

writer—a job that requires much venturing out on one's own—it's that dining with me, myself, and I can be a delicious experience.

There's an art to doing it right. If I'm in a chatty mood, I'll choose a small, funky place—the sort of joint where the food tells a story about the people who grow and cook it—and start asking questions. About the seasonal greens in the veggie special. About the art gallery next door. About how my server is doing that evening. The conversations that result bring a sense of place that can be elusive when I'm focused on a dining companion, and I get to know people I wouldn't otherwise have met.

But there are other times when I choose instead to indulge in what has become my soulful, foodie treat, taking that rare opportunity to be in my head, zone out without apology, and connect with what's on my plate. Free from distractions, I can focus on the subtle grassy notes in my goat cheese or how it feels when I let it slowly melt on my tongue. Often I eat less—studies have found that dining with others can increase the number of calories you consume—but taste so much more.

As I write this, I've just returned from an assignment in Italy. Though the language barrier prevented much conversation, I watched plates come out of the kitchen and smiled at the happy families and couples all around me and savored every last mouthful of my ravioli. The waiters seemed so charmed by the notion of a woman dining alone that they presented me with a gratis glass of wine and the most delicious tiramisu I've ever tasted. Best of all? I didn't have to share.

### Going It Alone

Three tips for making the most of your next solo meal.

• If you'd like to strike up a conversation, eat at the bar or choose a restaurant with communal seating. (And make sure it's not too loud.) If neither is available, ask for a table with a good view of the floor (or open kitchen, if there is one) and dine before or after

the dinner rush, when your server will have time to chat.

• If you're hoping to focus solely on your food, choose a restaurant that serves tapas or small plates so you can try a variety of items, or ask for a few half portions.

• Feeling nervous about your reservation for one? Bring a book if you must, but resist the urge to stay glued to your phone or catch up on work. The point of dining solo is to enjoy some quality time with you—not your to-do list. —A.S.