

ART / BOOKS / DESIGN / FASHION / FOOD & WINE / GARDENING / TRAVEL... AND OTHER WEEKEND TREATS**HELEN HAYWARD** AUTHOR

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

words **TIM MARTAIN**
photography **LUKE BOWDEN**

Having an emotional relationship with the food we consume is not a strange concept. We often speak of "comfort eating" in relation to whatever guilty pleasure we indulge in during our weaker moments. But Hobart author Helen Hayward believes the concept of comfort eating has been hijacked and we should pay more attention to our feelings and bodies when deciding what to eat and cook for ourselves.

This idea is the basis for a new website called Food as Therapy, which suggests recipe ideas based on how you are feeling and what your body needs in a soulful sense. A trained psychotherapist, Hayward says she has an interest in food but does not consider herself to be a great cook, which is sort of the point.

"Someone might say, 'I can't cook' but what does that mean? Anyone can push down a piece of bread in a toaster," she says.

"These days we're confronted with this pornography of food - we get the image first, the idealisation, this fantasy of what it could be for this wonderful chef or beautifully pixelated magazine image, but we know we can't replicate it on our own kitchen bench, so we feel a bit demeaned and demoralised by it, a bit defeated.

"Food as Therapy is taking back the power to the individual, asking, 'What do I need now?' Instead of trying to please others, we should ask, 'What is it that I'm trying to get? What is my mood? How can I help myself?' This is something I think we all struggle with at a very profound level. How do I look after myself? How do I meet my needs at a practical level?"

In a way, Food as Therapy acts like a reverse cookbook. Instead of flicking through hundreds of elaborate images of impossibly perfect dishes and trying to decide which one is worth tackling or most impressive, the web tool begins with your emotions and works back from there.

As well as trying to address our physical and emotional needs through food suggestions, Food as Therapy is also intended to act as a kind of portable cookbook. Hayward says she deliberately avoided picking flashy recipes, opting instead for the sort of dishes for which people would already have most of the basic ingredients in their kitchen.

"Try to ask yourself, at what moment in the day do you think about what's for dinner? Part of this app is about taking power back for yourself in that way," she says. "Am I going to address my needs through food tonight? If so, how?"

Visit the website at foodastherapy.org. A free app is on the way and will be downloadable from the theschooloflife.com website. Helen Hayward's next book, *Talking Food in Tasmania*, comes out early next year

