

Three kitchen theologians in their own words

Sidebar

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When I finished my dissertation on the grace of microbial theology—on the way God meets humans through microorganisms—I went in search of my old kombucha brewing barrel. I found it behind the greenhouse, with an abandoned bird’s nest inside. The competitive pace and demands of classical theology had pulled me from the very flesh of the world I sought to theologize. I found that some of the theologians whose earthy prose drew me to study theology in the first place were no different—their lives similarly poor in the round rhythms of domestic life. The balance is precarious. These days, as a microbial theologian, I work in a fermentation lab, where, if anything, my theological technique has gone the way of that old kombucha barrel, while the microbes take center stage. During good weeks I manage to weave theology back into the labor of getting the chapter written and food from soil to the table. This messier mix of microorganisms, soil, and supper makes for a slower theology, a slimmer CV, and hopefully a heartier theologian.

—Aminah Al-Attas Bradford is an Arab American scholar of religion and Christian thought at North Carolina State University.

It is late when I get home. I throw down my bag, jab on the oven, and dump ingredients on the counter—white beans, tomato paste, lemon, garlic, rosemary, mozzarella, parmesan. But the food resists my speed. Rinsing, zesting, mincing, grating, I am slowed by the care these movements require. I waver at the threshold of work and leisure, feeling the pull to finish the task of meal-making and the divine invitation to delight in it. The toil of the day clings to me. Sautéing, stirring, and baking, I watch the ingredients soften and then harden again, transforming into the meal. Spoon in hand, I assent to my own end-of-day transformation, hovering near the flame that melts this threshold of rest and labor.

—*Natalie Carnes is a constructive theologian at Baylor University.*

Abuelita theology is a theology birthed through *lo cotidiano*, the everyday. It is not lofty but informal. Some call abuelita theology “kitchen theology” because it is formed in the kitchen—while *frijoles negros* (black beans) are simmering on the stove, the floor is being mopped, and the *cafecito* (coffee) is brewing. Abuelita theology takes form while family members are sitting around *la mesa* (the table) discussing *la lucha*, the struggle of everyday life. Abuelita theology as a kitchen theology reflects the beautifully communal and natural formation of faith in *la cocina*, the kitchen. However, this reality is true primarily because our abuelitas are often relegated to *la cocina* due to the existence of machismo. Thus, abuelita theology inhabits a complicated, interstitial space.

—*Kat Armas is a Cuban American theologian and author of Abuelita Faith (2021 Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group), from which this passage is excerpted with permission.*