



TABLE Essay Challenge

Would you like to win the chance for your work to be published on the [TABLE website](#)?

TABLE is holding an essay competition that will launch with the University of Oxford's Green Action Week and close for submissions on 25 March 2024 at 23:59 GMT.

Your essay should be prompted by the following question:

Should food systems be more natural?

We encourage you to think creatively about this question, drawing on your own experience, disciplinary background, and interests.

TIP: At TABLE, we are interested in the deep values and assumptions that shape our ideas about food and our hopes for the future of the food system. Interrogate them for a strong submission!

To explore this question, you might choose to:

- **Tell us about an emerging or underappreciated food issue that you feel doesn't get enough attention.** What do TABLE readers need to know about the issue? Why is it important? How does it relate to nature and ideas of naturalness?
- **Share a formative experience that shaped your views on food.** Perhaps a childhood memory of family mealtimes, a conversation with a farmer, a supermarket job, a friend's change of diet, or a memorable documentary or lecture. How did it make you think about the food system and ideas of what is and isn't natural? How might your views be different now if you hadn't had this experience?
- **How do you change others', or your own, views and beliefs about food?** Is it from talking to people in your community, showing compelling scientific evidence, hearing from inspiring or trusted sources (news, politicians, scientists)? Can you share a story of what made you change either your beliefs, your support for a food stakeholder, your diet or otherwise?
- **Or take another approach!**

Some examples of topics we are interested include (but are not limited to):

- Cultures of eating, cultural histories of eating, and how the past of food relates to the present and future of food
- “Natural” food vs “artificial” and “technological” foods
- The debate surrounding ultra-processed foods
- The nature-culture divide
- The domination or domestication of nature as it relates to food
- Inter-species relationships and eating
- The land-sparing vs land-sharing debate: should the food system be making space for nature?
- Regenerative agriculture and agroecology as forms of “natural” farming
- The deep history of food: are humans “natural” meat eaters? Did cooking make us what we are today?

Criteria

We will accept written, video or audio essays. For written essays, please keep entries to 1500 words. Video essays should have a runtime of 5 minutes or less, audio essays 7 minutes or less.

Essays will be judged on how well they communicate unique and creative viewpoints and embody the TABLE ethos. We want to hear stories and arguments that explore the author’s own biases and values.

Eligibility

The challenge is open to students who are currently studying for or have recently (in the last 18 months) completed an undergraduate, postgraduate or doctoral degree AND young people aged 18-25 regardless of enrollment status in a degree programme. There is no fee for entering the challenge.

Submission

Please send your essay as an attachment to info@tabledebates.org with the subject line “Essay Challenge”. In the case of video or audio essays, you may send a link or send the file directly through [Wetransfer](https://www.wetransfer.com/). Please email info@tabledebates.org if you have any questions about the competition.

[Read more about TABLE](#)