

What the World Eats, by Peter Menzel Essay

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Four people sit kneeling around a small table in a small room laden with food. A room where a serious man in a black box holds out a can of something altered and edible, and a young girl perched near her mother clutches a bag of potato chips to her chest as if claiming it as solely her own. This is the scene depicted in a photograph of the Ukita family in Kodaira City, Japan as part of a series taken by Peter Menzel for the book "What the World Eats". This series of photographs illustrates not only what people eat in different parts of the world, but also how their families, and lives as fellow humans can so closely resemble our own.

The Ukita family is kneeling around a small table in a small room. The extent of the [food](#) they've purchased over the past week is arranged around this tiny living area. The space is somewhat cramped as they attempt to arrange themselves comfortably, and Mio Ukita, the eldest daughter of the family finds herself squeezed into the far right corner of the room next to a red tray of plastic wrapped cakes. A television no one's thought to turn off blares brightly in the room as a processed food commercial beams to life and an actor holds out the heralded food item as if sternly urging the audience to simply reach out and take it. The screen is paused at this moment as it's determined to be the perfect image to make the scene complete, and the Ukita's youngest daughter, Maya, reaches out for a

bag of her favorite potato chips. She clutches the bag to her chest as she maneuvers her way back to perch on a red cushion near her mother. Everyone looks up at something only they can see, and from that spot a bright light flashes, and a photograph is taken (D'Aluisio & Menzel, 2008, p.94).

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