

AmiJo Comeford: “I Can’t Eat This Stuff Another Night”: Food and Narrative Identity-Making in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*

Across cultures, cartographic lines, and generations, one constant is eternally present: food. Though sometimes food ingestion equates primarily to survival, it is always, nonetheless, an essential component to culture and serves as a fundamental component to individual identity. As freelance writer Amy S. Choi observes, “Our comfort foods map who we are, where we come from, and what happened to us along the way.” This close connection between food and identity in its various incarnations has been explored in literature for centuries, sometimes even operating as the primary mode of narrative deliverance.

BtVS and *Angel* are rife with scenes containing food as a visual or audible focal point (not unusual in a vampire narrative, since blood-as-food is indispensable to the genre itself), sometimes occurring individually but more often occurring inside of chosen, and sometimes forced, communities. When we closely examine the way food is used at critical points in *BtVS* and *Angel*, we discover that food—its sharing, ingestion, and refusal—acts as both conveyer and creator of group and individual narrative progression as well as a distinct cue to viewers about how they should read particular narrative moments and character relationships.

For several years now, Whedon scholars have been studying, critiquing, and identifying diverse genres in the Whedonverse that typically, and occasionally untypically, occur in traditional forms of literature. Inside of these individual discussions, references to food or analysis of scenes dominated by food are occasionally used to solidify or shore up a particular claim. Yet, within the body of Whedon scholarship, food as the focal point of analysis has not been undertaken with any definite purpose. The paper I propose fills this gap by connecting what has been a foundational analysis of the Whedonverse—identity—with a new point of reference for that identity creation—food.