

A political food truck

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

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Chicago-based artist Michael Rakowitz is opening a food-truck this week, a date set to coincide with the ninth anniversary of the beginning of the Iraq War.

Through his project Enemy Kitchen, Rakowitz has been using Iraqi food and culture to break down cultural barriers for several years. He is launching the food truck as part of the Smart Museum of Art's new exhibit called "[Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art](#)."

The food truck flies the Iraqi flag, prepares Iraqi food and is staffed by U.S. Iraq war veterans and local Iraqi cooks. One veteran, Aaron Hughes, also prepares cardamom-spiced tea--and serves it in Styrofoam cups, as a gesture to the lives of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. He [explained this detail to Time-Out Chicago](#):

In Guantanamo Bay, the only object detainees are allowed to have in their cell are Styrofoam cups for tea,

so they draw all over them. They never write anything, they always just draw flowers.

Hughes's cups, too, will come with drawings.

Enemy Kitchen stands out from typical protest with its gesture of hospitality. Political street theater frequently aims to shock passersby into recognition. But Enemy Kitchen reaches out instead with a gift, an invitation to share something sacred: food and tea. Somehow this gesture is more profound than 1,000 bodies marked with fake blood.

I find myself wishing I had the creative resources to dream up dozens of similar project--projects that could dramatically incarnate the connection between politics and hospitality, that could challenge and transform our perceptions of our so-called enemies.