

Community Dinner Instructions

Thank you for your interesting in leading a community dinner. Community Dinners have been a part of the Welcome Ministry since it began in 1996. Originally the dinners alternated between Old First Presbyterian Church (Van Ness and Sacramento) and St. Luke's Episcopal Church (Van Ness and Clay). Since then the dinners have been hosted by many different church groups, non-profit organizations, business, fraternal organizations, families, and even individuals.

Location

Dinners are hosted within a 4-6 block radius of Old First. Historically they have been held at Old First, St. Luke's and the First Unitarian Universalist Church (Geary and Franklin). Free parking is available for volunteers at the Old First Parking Garage on Sacramento between Van Ness and Polk with validation.

Hosting a Dinner

Dinner hosts are expected to bring between 10-25 volunteers in order to serve the dinner. More volunteers can be used if the dinner responsibilities are divided up into shifts: cooking (before 5:30); serving (4:30-7:00); clean up (6:30-7:30 or 8:00).

Dinner hosts are also expected to provide the meal, which at a minimum should consist of a main dish, a side, a dessert, a drink and coffee (unless other arrangements are made).

Deciding What Food to Serve

Some organizations make a homemade meal. Some get the food catered. Some get frozen meals and heat them up. Some groups have a pot-luck and ask volunteers to sign-up for bringing or making part of the meal. Arrangements can be made to get some of what you need at the San Francisco Food Bank if we are given enough time.

When planning your meal, it is important to remember that many of our homeless and hungry friends do not have many or strong teeth. Try to avoid food that is too hard to be eaten by someone who has no teeth (ie hard bread, raw apples, raw carrots, lettuce that is not crisp).

It is also to remember that many of the homeless and hungry have low immune systems and do not eat regularly. So it is particularly important to try and have a nutritionally balanced meals.

Here are some other hints that we have learned over the years:

- Our guests really, really enjoy sweets, sugary desserts and candy
- Our guests request butter when they are served bread
- Our guests don't mind spicy food and many will add hot sauce to spicy food
- Our guests need a lot of protein
- When serving meat, some sort of vegetarian alternative should be available. For example if you are serving lasagna, one of every four lasagnas should be vegetarian.
- When serving pork or a main dish with pork in it, you will need more vegetarian alternatives available. For example if you are serving lasagna, one of every three lasagnas should be vegetarian.
- Not all the homeless like to eat their vegetables, but if you put the vegetables in the main dish they will almost all eat them.
- Try to limit the amount of salt used to prepare the meal. Many of our guests have high blood pressure and/or cholesterol.

How Much Food to Prepare

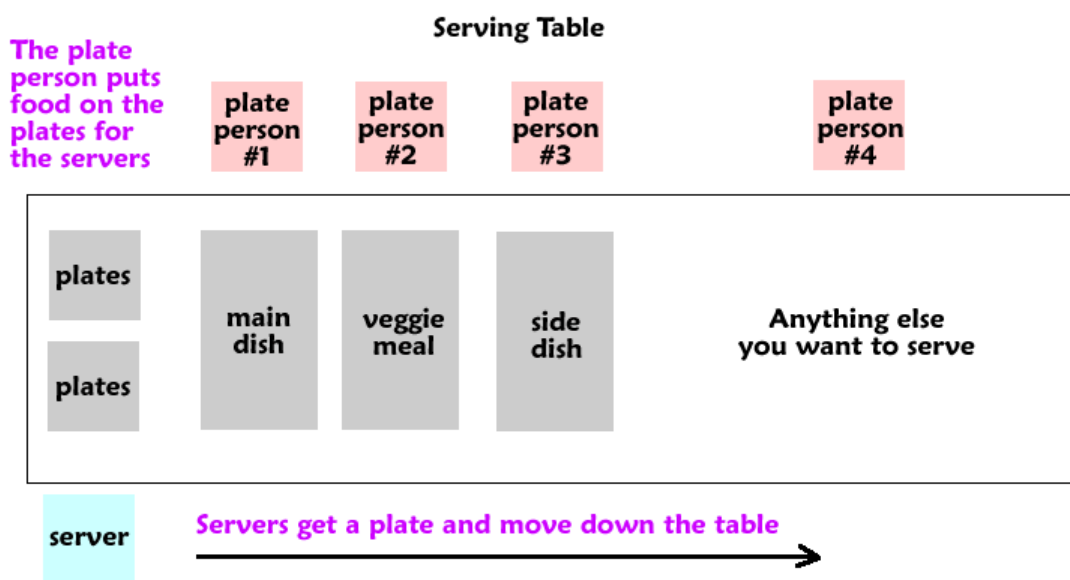
Though there is no way to know how many guests we will have, it is always best to have more food than guests. You should try to have enough food for 120 people.

Here are some other hints that we have learned over the years:

- Less people general come towards the beginning of the month (around 80). More people come the closer it gets to the 15th of the month (as many as 140).
- More people come if it is raining outside.
- More people come if the dinner is between October and December 31st.
- Less people come in January – two weeks before Easter.
- More people come around Easter time.

Serving the Food

The way we host a dinner is unique because we serve people (there is no line for our guests) and volunteers that feel comfortable are invited to eat with our guests. Though this the way most people are used to eating, it is rarely the way people feed the homeless and hungry. In fact, we only know of 2 other organizations in the country were volunteers eat with those they serve.



There is a separate table and servers for drinks and another separate table and group of servers for coffee. Dessert are left in the kitchen and then served when everyone has their main dish. Seconds are not served until the leader gives the ok and an announcement will be made to our guests if seconds are available. We do not serve seconds if we do not have enough for everyone who wants it or if it means that we will not be able to feed those who come later in the meal.

Paper Products and Clean-up

Though it is less eco-friendly, we encourage groups to bring paper or non-CFC Styrofoam products to serve our guests. This saves volunteers an average of three hours in clean-up time. Groups that do not want to use paper products, are welcome to use the china, glasses and coffee cups available at the site of the dinner, but will need to supply three people (preferably who arrive at 6:30) to do the dishes. Doing the dishes after a dinner where china has been used, usually takes until 9:00 and has sometimes taken until 12:30 in the morning.

Here are some things that can be purchased that will speed up the clean up of the dinner:

- Paper or non-CFC Styrofoam plates, cups (for drinks and thicker cups for coffee), silverware (appropriate for the meal you are serving) and napkins.
- Plastic table clothes for the tables (St. Luke's has round tables and 3 long tables; Old First has long tables)

Clean-up begins as guests leave. When an entire table is empty, the chairs are removed to encourage those who arrive later in the meal to sit with others. Cleaning at tables where people are still eating can be seen as rushing the guests. Try to refrain from doing this until 7:00.

Clean-up at Old First:

- Put away folding chairs
- Put away all but 5 tables as directed
- Mop the floor
- Empty the trash cans
- Clean the bathroom
- Do the dishes
- Clean the kitchen surfaces and mop the floor
- Vacuum Munro Room if needed

Clean-up at St. Luke's:

- Stack chairs (three on top of each other)
- Move tables and chairs as directed
- Clean table surfaces
- Do dishes
- Clean kitchen surfaces and mop the floor
- Vacuum floor if needed
- Clean the bathroom

Schedule

BEGIN – 4:45 Food prepared

4:00-4:45 Set-up for the dinner

4:45-5:15 Devotional/Learning time and jobs are assigned

5:15-5:30 Drinks and food brought out, final preparation finished

5:30-7:00 Doors open and guests are served

6:30-DONE Clean-up begins as guests leave.