



# KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

## How to start a Community Meal program







## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

Community meals play a vital role in many different groups and associations, from churches to social service organizations, bringing together diverse communities through the universal experience of enjoying good food and building better health and community.

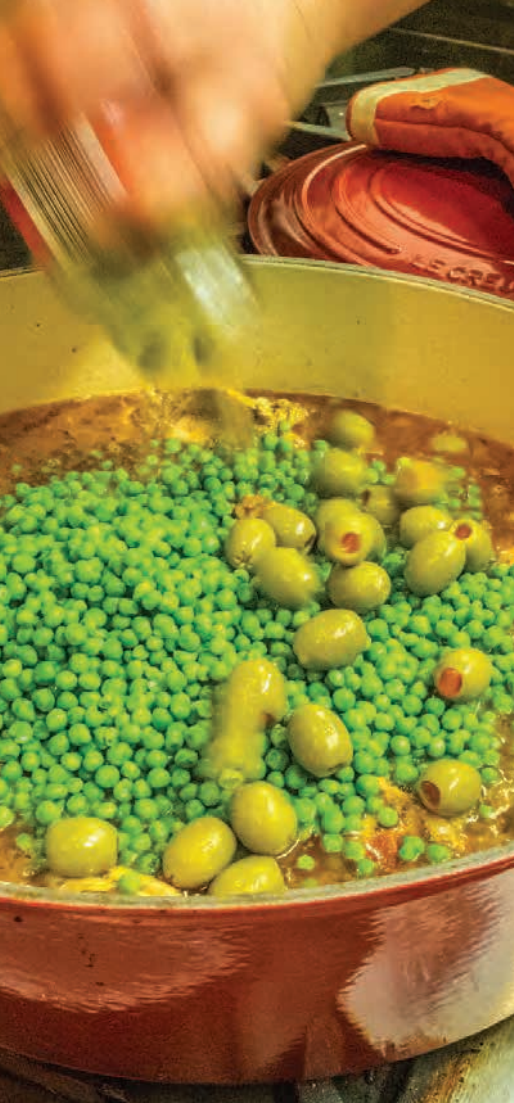
Community Food Centres Canada developed this manual to guide and inspire chefs and program managers who are developing a Community Meal program (also known as a drop-in meal program) at a Community Food Centre (CFC) or Good Food Organization (GFO). While every organization is unique — each addressing a different community and its particular needs, aspirations, and challenges — a set of overarching guidelines and best practices for Community Meal programs has emerged as the Community Food Centre model has evolved. This manual outlines those guidelines and best practices, and has been created to reflect the different experiences of three Community Chefs at The Stop Community Food Centre (Toronto, ON), The Table Community Food Centre (Perth, ON) and The Local Community Food Centre (Stratford, ON).

At each of these CFCs, the Community Meals program aims to:

- reduce hunger in the community;
- provide (and model how to prepare) delicious, healthy food;
- create a free community space where people can connect with their neighbours;
- offer a pathway to connect people to a variety of programs and supports; and
- provide a springboard for complementary programming that increases cooking and nutrition skills among volunteers and participants.

The goal of this manual is to demonstrate the diverse forms the program can and does take. You may find that not all of the information presented is relevant to your community's specific needs, or possible given the infrastructure available to you. Feel free to adapt as necessary!





## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

Community meals play a vital role in many different groups and associations, from churches to social service organizations, bringing together diverse communities through the universal experience of enjoying good food and building better health and community.

Community Food Centres Canada developed this manual to guide and inspire chefs and program managers who are developing a Community Meal program (also known as a drop-in meal program) at a Community Food Centre (CFC) or Good Food Organization (GFO). While every organization is unique — each addressing a different community and its particular needs, aspirations, and challenges — a set of overarching guidelines and best practices for Community Meal programs has emerged as the Community Food Centre model has evolved. This manual outlines those guidelines and best practices, and has been created to reflect the different experiences of three Community Chefs at The Stop Community Food Centre (Toronto, ON), The Table Community Food Centre (Perth, ON) and The Local Community Food Centre (Stratford, ON).

At each of these CFCs, the Community Meals program aims to:

- reduce hunger in the community;
- provide (and model how to prepare) delicious, healthy food;
- create a free community space where people can connect with their neighbours;
- offer a pathway to connect people to a variety of programs and supports; and
- provide a springboard for complementary programming that increases cooking and nutrition skills among volunteers and participants.

The goal of this manual is to demonstrate the diverse forms the program can and does take. You may find that not all of the information presented is relevant to your community's specific needs, or possible given the infrastructure available to you. Feel free to adapt as necessary!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Community Chef:</b> Roles and Responsibilities	<b>9</b>
<b>The Best-laid Plans:</b> How to Organize and Get People to Eat Nutritious Meals	<b>13</b>
<b>Slow-rising Dough:</b> How to Make Cheap Meals	<b>19</b>
<b>Pressure Cooker:</b> How to Work with Volunteers	<b>21</b>
<b>Starting from Scratch:</b> Setting Up and Maintaining a Kitchen	<b>25</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Recipes</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
<b>A:</b> Good Food Principles	<b>42</b>
<b>B:</b> 10 Tips on Running a Drop-in Meal Program	<b>43</b>
<b>C:</b> Sample Community Chef Job Description	<b>44</b>
<b>D:</b> Meal Log Template	<b>45</b>
<b>E:</b> Sample Weekly Menu	<b>46</b>
<b>F:</b> Local Food Procurement Guide	<b>47</b>
<b>G:</b> Inventory List	<b>48</b>
<b>H:</b> Good Food Rules	<b>49</b>
<b>I:</b> Sample Budget for Small Kitchen Items	<b>50</b>
<b>J:</b> Sample Posters for a Community Meal	<b>51</b>
<b>K:</b> Designing a Volunteer Position	<b>52</b>
<b>L:</b> Program Staff Responsibilities for Volunteers	<b>53</b>
<b>M:</b> Supporting Volunteers	<b>54</b>







# INTRODUCTION

Community Meal programs are central to the Community Food Centre model, and an effective way to meet a basic need of access to healthy food in a respectful and dignified manner. Also known as drop-in meals, community meals are a common entry point into the diverse programs at Community Food Centres. **Food access programs** such as the Community Meal are complimented by **food skills programs**, which develop healthy food behaviours and skills, primarily in the areas of gardening and cooking, and **education and engagement programs**, which work to give people and communities a voice and agency on food and hunger issues.

## The Space

The community meal is characteristically served in a space that functions as a combination dining room and

community gathering place. When animated by dedicated staff, this space is a safe, welcoming, and vibrant place where community members can eat together but can also, during non-meal hours, simply relax, chat, read the newspaper, play games, or participate in organized activities. In Community Food Centres, community dining rooms try to comfortably seat 80 people at minimum (ideally 100+). Spaces are decorated with chalkboards, program posters, photos, and other visuals.

The dining area can be animated by a variety of staff ranging from the Community Chef, who may be holding food demonstrations, or by other staff and participants hosting social justice clubs or movie nights. It's very helpful if staff animating the space have the ability to calmly and subtly resolve conflict as it arises. More than

## THE ROGELS' STORY

Delmy and Gilberto Rogel moved to Canada from El Salvador in 2006 with their daughter Ariana. In San Salvador, Delmy worked as a journalist at a community radio station, while Gilberto taught politics and sociology at Don Bosco University. The family moved to Toronto knowing no one in the city. "When we started our life here, we tried to be positive, to connect with society," explains Delmy. "We took Ariana to community swimming and ballet classes, to the beach, trying different things that would make us feel like a part of Toronto."

The Rogels found out about The Stop while seeking immigration advice at the nearby Community Action Resource Centre. A worker there suggested they come to the Drop-in for lunch. They walked in thinking it was a restaurant, and walked out with a much different perspective on the neighbourhood. Soon, both parents were attending sessions at Sabor Latino, a Spanish language community kitchen program. When Delmy became pregnant with the couple's second child, she joined The Stop's Healthy Beginnings program, and came back when she was carrying their third. "When you're pregnant, you really need support, and Healthy Beginnings gives you that," says Delmy. "I made friends there that I still keep in touch with."



*The Stop's Healthy Beginnings program offers pre- and post-natal nutrition and support.*

"My experience with The Stop has helped me discover my way," says Delmy. "Now, I want to give back." Delmy recently started the Community Worker Program at George Brown College. While balancing three young kids and a busy home life with school work that's not in her native language is challenging, Delmy's loving it. "I love keeping in touch with the community."





# HEALTHY COMMUNITY MEALS

## Our Theory:

The quality of food and the way it is served are important. A delicious, healthy meal served in a convivial social setting builds morale and health, and connects people to each other and to a variety of supports.

## What We Know:



### LEFT OUT

Respondents above the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) were 2.31 times more likely than those below to report a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. (Stewart et al. 2009)

### \$6.3 BN

Estimated annual costs to Canadians of unhealthy eating. (Health Canada)

### 40%

The percentage of adult visitors to Canadian food banks who go hungry at least one day per week. (Daily Bread Food Bank)

## What We Do About It:

- Plan, cook and serve free nutritious and delicious meals.
- Source seasonal fruits and vegetables from local, sustainable farmers whenever possible.
- Post a healthy daily menu and provide vegetarian and culturally-appropriate dietary options.
- Serve meals restaurant-style to participants seated at the table to maintain dignity.
- Offer fun, interactive activities and other informal opportunities for socializing.
- Offer food demonstrations and nutrition information to get people to try and learn new things.
- Consistently enforce policies that ensure a safe and welcoming environment.
- Maintain a colourful, well-lit and clean space.
- Connect people to other community food centre programs, and to The Stop's Community Advocacy Office, where peers can help them access services and entitlements and other supports (ID clinics, settlement services, legal aid) and to opportunities to take action for change.

## What We Aim to Achieve:



### MODEL HEALTHY EATING

ENSURE THAT RESPECT FOR PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY AND ASSETS IS MIRRORED IN EVERY ASPECT OF DROP-IN SERVICES

CONNECT PEOPLE TO A VARIETY OF SUPPORTS BEYOND FOOD

### REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION

REDUCE HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY

## It Works!

### 92%

of people surveyed in The Stop's Drop-in who face hunger and food insecurity report that The Stop plays an important role in helping them cope.

"You can't go hungry in this neighbourhood."

### 81%

of people surveyed in The Stop's Drop-in space report that they have made new friends with other participants at The Stop.

"My family is here. Before it was alcohol and chips. I was on my way out."

### 75%

feel that they belong to a community at The Stop.

"It's like a second home."

## The Bigger Change We'd Like To See:

Community members are happier, healthier and more connected. The value of mutual respect radiates outward from the Drop-in into the wider community. The importance of high-quality community meal programs is more widely recognized and supported, and new programs that transcend the "soup kitchen" stigma proliferate across Canada.

just a place to have a meal, the dining room can act as a gateway to community engagement. The space, both during and outside of meals, can be a place for effective outreach; program coordinators can inform participants about Peer Advocacy Office hours, say, or invite them to join other events.

At The Table in Perth, the community dining room is staffed by a volunteer animator who greets people as they come in the door. That person makes people feel welcome and at ease. The animator sometimes shares information about other programming — telling pregnant women about the Good Food for a Healthy Baby program, for example — while staff and volunteers join community members at the table to talk about other available programs.

At The Local in Stratford, Ontario, staff offer various forms of entertainment and education in the community dining room: after the 60+ Seniors Lunch (Appendix J), guests are invited to present recipes, lead the group in simple exercises, or play piano for a sing-a-long. Prior to their Wellness Breakfast, a yoga instructor comes in for a light stretching session.

At all CFCs, the Community Meal provides access to a hot and healthy breakfast, lunch, or dinner to people struggling with hunger and food insecurity. It is also a way of demonstrating what an affordable, healthy meal can look and taste like. The effect is immediate: diners who may have been unaware of — or even fearful of — a vegetable like kale can learn that when prepared well, it can be delicious.

## The Food

A tasty, nutritious meal served in a convivial setting boosts morale, increases physical and mental health, and connects people to each other and a variety of supports. The Community Meal:

- provides free nutritious and delicious meals on a regular basis;
- uses seasonal fruits, vegetables, and meats sourced from local, sustainable farmers wherever possible;
- provides vegetarian and culturally appropriate dietary options;
- serves meals to participants seated at their tables to maintain dignity;
- offers fun, interactive activities and other informal opportunities for socializing before and after meals;
- offers food demonstrations and nutrition information that encourage people to try new foods;
- enforces policies that ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all;
- maintains a colourful, well-lit, and clean space; and
- connects people to other programs and community resources and supports as needed.

Different communities have different needs and resources, and will choose to offer a different schedule of meals. The Stop once offered a mid-afternoon snack in addition to its breakfasts, a schedule that evolved, in response to demand, to four breakfasts and four lunches a week. The Local CFC in Stratford, offers a 60+ Seniors Lunch every Wednesday, in addition to their Monday Night Dinner and Wellness Breakfast. The Table, meanwhile, offers three community dinners every week.

The number of meals offered, and the number of diners attending each meal, will also depend on the number of meal programs available at other organizations in the community, as well as the time of year or month. Most CFCs see an increase in numbers towards the end of the month, as participants' budgets reach their limit.

## What We Hear: Evaluating Community Meal Programs

In 2014, The Stop, The Table, The Local, and Regent Park Community Food Centres served a total of 143,119 healthy meals.

As part of the annual program survey conducted across all CFCs, we ask participants what they like most about the Community Meal, and what difference the program had made in their lives. Here's what we heard in 2014:

*“It saved my mental health having the proper amount of nutrition each week.”*

— participant at **The Stop Community Food Centre**, Toronto

*“The meals are nutritious, they're colourful, good for you and fresh. Lots of variety and we have a community chef who knows what she's doing.”*

— participant at **The Table Community Food Centre**, Perth, ON

*“It's always a good meal. It's healthy. For some people here, it's the only good meal they'll have this week. I'm glad this place is here.”*

— participant at **The Local Community Food Centre**, Stratford, ON



## RELATED RESOURCES

### Good Food Principles

(Appendix A)

### 10 Tips on Running a Drop-in Meal Program

(Appendix B)

### Sample Posters for a Community Meal

(Appendix J)





# THE COMMUNITY CHEF: ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Community Chef is the linchpin of the Community Meal Program. He or she is responsible for purchasing and organizing food and supplies, running the kitchen, supervising and training volunteers, and ensuring a safe, efficient workplace.

There are several challenges that keep the Community Chef's job interesting. He or she usually works with a limited budget, and has to plan menus that may contain a significant amount of donated (and not always predictable) food. He or she tends to produce a meal with the help of volunteers with a range of cooking experience. In addition, the chef strives to produce a healthy meal for a large number of people with as little waste as possible, and to accommodate diners who may have little interest in unfamiliar ingredients and dishes.

It's incredibly beneficial to have a Community Chef that possesses the skills of a professional chef, and is simultaneously incredibly flexible, patient, and good humoured. While Community Meal kitchens require, like any commercial kitchen, a hierarchical structure with the chef at the top, they are no place for the outsized egos and temper tantrums common in restaurants; no one wants a Gordon Ramsay cooking a Community Meal.

Organization is also a must-have skill in a Community Chef, as tracking past meals and planning for future ones is part and parcel of the job. See the sample Community Chef Job Description (Appendix C) for a starting place in your search for a chef. The Meal Log Template (Appendix D) is a good tool for chefs to track ingredients and costs of his/her meals while also capturing diner feedback, skills volunteers may have learned, and powerful stories that can be retold publicly. The Sample Weekly Menu (Appendix E) is another good tool that can assist in weekly meal planning across programs, managing related prep, and ordering food.

## Donations vs. Purchasing

The meals in Community Meal programs are created using a varying proportion of donated and purchased food. The amount of each depends on budgets, storage supplies, and relationships with suppliers. In the early days, the meals at The Stop consisted of approximately 50 per cent donated food; currently, that amount is less than 5 per cent. That shift occurred for two reasons: one, most donated food now goes directly to the Food Bank, reflecting a shift in the philosophy around their

## THE MAKING OF A COMMUNITY CHEF

When Judy Dempsey, Community Chef at The Table, opened her extremely popular restaurant, the Hungry Planet, in 1997, it was unlike anything Perth had ever seen. The menu changed every couple days and she focused as much as possible on local and seasonal produce. This was long before such terms became the buzzwords they are today, and Dempsey's commitment to those culinary ideals was anything but commonplace.

A self-taught cook, Dempsey started a catering company for film studios in the early 80s. She moved to Perth to raise her kids and helped start the town's first farmers' market (where she also sold what she calls "weird breads and interesting sauces"). Intending to start catering again, she found a space that could also house a restaurant and the Hungry Planet was born. Dempsey ran the restaurant for 12 years; that success required an incredible amount of work. After more than a decade of 80-hour work weeks, she closed the Hungry Planet and took a couple other food-related jobs before helping, in 2013, to transform the local food bank into what is now The Table Community Food Centre. "It's really deeply gratifying to make delicious food for people who really appreciate it," Dempsey says. "It was my most unbelievable, charming dream come true, to be able to do this."





Food Bank hampers (once they were identical and now, hampers are as flexible as possible to accommodate participants' various diets and needs); and two, the purchasing budget was significantly increased.

Very few organizations will have comparable purchasing power, especially in the early years of offering the program, and as a result will need to rely somewhat on donations. At The Local, former Community Chef Jordan Lassaline created his meals with about 60 to 75 per cent donated product — the consequence of their also operating a separate warehouse/distribution centre called the Storehouse, staffed by someone whose job is, in part, about securing large donations from local agricultural producers. (The Storehouse is also used by other area food banks, student nutrition programs and shelters.) There, the warehouse drives menus to a certain extent — produce arrives in large quantities (a couple thousand pounds of peppers, for example) and the Community Chef's job is to use it before it spoils.

To secure produce donations, chefs establish relationships with local farmers, many of whom will donate produce that, while still completely edible, may not meet the criteria for sale (too big or too small, too blemished, etc.), and may otherwise go to waste. Farmers who produce seasonal food in great abundance may not be willing to donate, but may be able to sell that produce at a reasonable price because of their production scale. (It's always preferable to be able to pay a farmer

for food, even at a reduced price — farmers may be willing to donate to charitable organizations but many of them are also struggling and finding a way to pay them is better.) Some farmers are still interested in donating produce, however, and such an offer can work out well. Often, these transactions emerge organically out of pre-existing relationships — The Stop's Community Chef Scott MacNeil once worked at Rowe Farms, a sustainable food retailer, and for a time was able to regularly secure frozen stir-fry meat that the company couldn't sell. Organizations in Ontario should note that the 2013 Local Food Act introduced a new non-refundable income tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural products to eligible community food programs, including food banks. The credit is worth 25 per cent of the fair market value of the agricultural products donated.

It's important to recognize the limitations of donations and establish a policy around their acceptance — just because food is free, doesn't mean it's good. People living on low incomes should not have to accept just any handout; if food is stale, wilted or gross in any way, it should not be accepted. (We encourage organizations to develop their own policies around food donations. Here's a motto that can be helpful: If in doubt, throw it out.) As a general rule at Community Food Centres, staff accepting donations work to ensure food is healthy, edible, and hasn't expired (not as obvious as you think — rotting pears and Burger King hamburger patties have accidentally been accepted in the past).

The size or source of a donation is sometimes a factor, too. Occasionally, well-intentioned but inflexible donors can only donate large quantities of a product, larger than an organization can accommodate. The Community Chef will try their best to incorporate the product into meal planning (or find other programs where it can be put to use). Where donations are a significant source of product, those donations will predictably, and significantly, determine what's on the menu.

Direct purchasing comes with its own set of complexities. Most CFCs use conventional restaurant suppliers for dry goods, produce, and paper products. Establishing a good relationship with a butcher is important, and since Community Meal programs often serve more people per day than a lot of restaurants, most suppliers should be able to offer generous discounts. Centralized ordering is usually ideal — to prevent overlap and waste, the Community Chef can order all products for both the Community Meal program and other programs that offer food, such as community kitchens. At The Stop, MacNeil creates a template/calendar with all meals for the week and what's needed for each meal and all the other programming that's scheduled for that week (see Appendix E). He sends a reminder email every Monday to the coordinators of all



*A volunteer harvests green onions in The Table's kitchen garden.*

Community Kitchen programs, asking what they need a week in advance. To fill gaps in supplies, and usually only for things that are occasionally needed, grocery store trips are necessary — at The Stop, this is only about 10 to 15 per cent of purchasing, and can usually be completed in a single trip. To avoid waste, MacNeil purchases whatever leftover food is available from The Stop's weekly Good Food Market. Some of that purchased food goes to the Food Bank and some to the Community Meal program. The day after the market, MacNeil organizes all the leftovers (usually only about \$200 in product) and divides it among different programs.

*Just because food is free,  
doesn't mean it's good.*

Wherever possible, we recommend supporting local farmers, as such purchases bolster the local economy and food system. The higher cost that local, sustainable food can entail will undoubtedly be a factor, but with careful budgeting and prioritizing, it's possible to regularly include locally produced ingredients — be they fresh produce, meat, dairy, eggs, or other products — in your menu. The short growing season around Perth, ON means that there's a fairly limited window for most fresh vegetables. Chef Judy Dempsey of The Table takes full advantage of local farmers' markets and her long-standing relationship with nearby farmers to source what she can while it's in supply. Of course, her meal program also benefits greatly from The Table's bountiful community garden, adding plenty of ultra-local greens, tomatoes, and cucumbers into the mix. The Local Food Procurement Guide (Appendix F) goes into more detail about sourcing and funding local food.

The quantity of both donated and purchased supplies depends on available storage. At The Table, which has extremely limited capacity, Chef Dempsey does almost all of her purchasing at local grocery stores, usually on a daily basis. (Space is so limited, in fact, that she keeps a set of shelves in her office, usually reserved for more exotic items she picks up when in Ottawa and Toronto.) The little freezer storage space Dempsey has is reserved mainly for protein. She purchases meat directly from local farmers — whole cows, pigs, and chickens — and preps them for use in meals and at fundraising events. Coordinating the preparation and consumption of that meat can take considerable planning. Dempsey tells the story of meeting with a farmer in February to purchase chickens. The chickens were killed in July and delivered to The Table's kitchen, where Dempsey spent an entire day cutting them up (she bought 40). Because the chickens were local and free-range and had used

their muscles, the meat was tougher and redder than the store-bought chicken diners were used to. To serve chicken legs people would actually eat, Dempsey spent another day slow-roasting the meat so that it could be more easily pulled from the bone and there was no colouration. She's had the same experience with beef — diners refuse to eat it because it's too pink — and typically has to hide it in Shepherd's Pie or chili. (More on this later.)

### Your Pantry Shelf

Maintaining a basic pantry shelf is straightforward. We recommend identifying the things you use most often and ensure they're in stock. For example, if you determine that you always want a minimum of 10 kgs. of all-purpose flour on hand, order three 20-kg bags at a time and, when that supply gets down to one bag, order three more. Create a spreadsheet of your most important staple items and their order quantities, print it out as a checklist, and on your order day, check your supplies and order accordingly (see Inventory List — Appendix G for an example). Of course, this assumes you have a significant amount of storage space. It also doesn't account for donated items, which may also be added to a pantry, or things that are required by Community Kitchen programs. If you're making a Persian meal, say, it makes more sense to buy those specific ingredients only when needed.



## RELATED RESOURCES

### Community Chef Job Description

(Appendix C)

### Meal Log Template

(Appendix D)

### Sample Weekly Menu

(Appendix E)

### Local Food Procurement Guide

(Appendix F)

### Inventory List

(Appendix G)

### Good Food Rules

(Appendix H)







# THE BEST-LAID PLANS: HOW TO ORGANIZE AND GET PEOPLE TO EAT NUTRITIOUS MEALS

Most institutional kitchens — those at nursing homes, hospitals, etc. — use a rotating menu, often on a three-month cycle. It's efficient, allows the kitchen to keep a minimum amount of product on hand, and provides clear guidance week in, week out. While kitchens at CFCs and GFOs can and should aspire to such efficiency, there are other important things to take into account. For one thing, menu cycles could take into consideration seasonality: a pasta dish can be planned months in advance but the key ingredients can be amended — the same recipe could include sweet potato in the winter and then asparagus in the spring. Other considerations for menu-planning, as mentioned earlier, are what donated or nearly stale-dated products need to be used up, if any, and also, not insignificantly, what menus will interest and challenge the Community Chef, the volunteers, and the diners. While some people like routine, others don't. Menus may need to be altered in response to diners' changing tastes (as the participant demographic shifts, for example, certain foods may fall out of favour).

For many Community Meal programs, planning only a week or two in advance is necessary but also usually sufficient. At The Local, former Community Chef Jordan Lassaline would start planning for the following week on Wednesday or Thursday, creating his menus based on what had been donated to their Storehouse. He found it helpful to put his Monday dinners on a rotation — that is, he asked his Monday volunteers what dishes they needed to have on rotation and they built a list that repeats four times a year. That allowed him to better connect with local farmers; he could tell them what dates in the coming months he needed chicken or pork and they would incorporate The Local's needs into their production. While that helped him plan main dishes, he always remained flexible on sides, salads, and desserts so he could make use of items that might crop up more unpredictably. Being too rigid in your planning is sometimes unhelpful.

At The Table, Community Chef Judy Dempsey actively resists too much planning. The short growing season in Perth means she takes full advantage of what's in season from week to week by incorporating the latest offerings into her menu plan as add-ons at the last minute.

Green beans and asparagus, for example, have a short run so as soon as they're in season, she makes room for them on the plate. Moreover, she sees her menus as a creative expression that evolves in response to both the feedback she gets from diners and her latest culinary inspiration. Her penchant for culturally diverse foods weaves its way into her menus; and while dishes like fish tacos and biryani may not have gone over too well initially, she's been able to find a happy medium with diners through subtle tweaks here and there.

## **You Do Make Friends with Salad!**

Offering vegetarian options regularly within the menu plan is a good idea not only because vegetarian options are generally healthier but also because vegetarian dishes can offer greater flexibility. That is, participants who require halal or kosher meals can still enjoy a vegetarian meal when halal and kosher options are not



*At The Stop, as with other CFCs, volunteers plate and deliver meals to diners, providing a more dignified experience.*

available. With some planning, the same dish can be adapted for both meat-eaters and vegetarians.

At The Stop, MacNeil makes one completely vegetarian meal for every three meat meals. At The Local, each meal includes three to four vegetables on every plate. CFCs find that even in multiethnic communities, the most popular dishes tend to be Western comfort food (meatloaf, lasagna, turkey dinner, pizza, etc.).



That said, it's important to acknowledge and accommodate the cultural diversity of the community where possible. This question of taking diversity into account — accommodating existing tastes while pushing the envelope a little — is a delicate one. See our Good Food Rules (Appendix H) for more on this!

In a restaurant, when you produce a taco, the appearance and size of the dish affects the customer's perception of value. There should be, in the eyes of the customer, an equitable exchange of their money for your product. Without that monetary exchange, value is perceived differently. The value of the product for the community members in The Stop's Community Meal is based on whether they're receiving the same amount as their fellow diners and also, crucially, whether the meal accurately accommodates their tastes and desires.

However, it is also true that sometimes you can win people over to new foods through sheer deliciousness. CFC chefs have had the experience of having their food rejected by people who find it too strange or unfamiliar, and of having someone give a rave review to some dish they always thought they'd hate, but actually liked when they had a chance to taste it.

Casually monitoring demographic shifts and changing your menu accordingly is important. It can be tricky to strike a balance. When he first started at The Stop, MacNeil had to make twice as much of the vegetarian alternative whenever he served a pork dish in order to satisfy halal and Caribbean diners. But as the Drop-in's Latino population increased, pork became more popular and the need for more vegetarian alternatives diminished (whether non-pork-eaters just stopped coming to the

## HEALTHY EATING PLATE

**HEALTHY OILS**

Use healthy oils (like olive and canola oil) for cooking, on salad, and at the table. Limit butter. Avoid trans fat.

**WATER**

Drink water, tea, or coffee (with little or no sugar). Limit milk/dairy (1-2 servings/day) and juice (1 small glass/day). Avoid sugary drinks.

**VEGETABLES**

The more veggies – and the greater the variety – the better. Potatoes and French fries don't count.

**WHOLE GRAINS**

Eat a variety of whole grains (like whole-wheat bread, whole-grain pasta, and brown rice). Limit refined grains (like white rice and white bread).

**FRUITS**

Eat plenty of fruits of all colors.

**HEALTHY PROTEIN**

Choose fish, poultry, beans, and nuts; limit red meat and cheese; avoid bacon, cold cuts, and other processed meats.

**STAY ACTIVE!**

© Harvard University

Harvard School of Public Health  
The Nutrition Source  
[www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource)

Harvard Medical School  
Harvard Health Publications  
[www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu)

*A simple, easy-to-use tool for menu planning and use in programs.*

Drop-in is difficult to determine).

Striking the right balance between health and diner satisfaction is tricky. To get there, Community Food Centres tend to base their meals on the general concept of the healthy plate — see the Harvard Healthy Eating Plate on the opposite page. Finding a way to include a very healthy portion of fruit and vegetables is important, as this is what so many people — people living on low-incomes in particular — lack in their diet. At The Stop, this has meant that each lunch includes some form of salad, with varying ingredients, but with as many nutritious green leafy vegetables (spinach, darker leaf lettuces, etc.) as possible. Salads are topped with homemade dressing, as well as other tasty and nutritious additions like cheese or nuts. Chefs strive to make their meals filling and not too fatty (but fatty enough to be satisfying and to give people pleasure and energy for an extended period of time). And while pleasing everyone is impossible, the Community Chef aspires to please as many members of the community as he or she can — over time, they find that sweet spot. In terms of appearance and taste, remember that you are not trying to create a restaurant-quality, cosmetically perfect meal but rather a home-cooked meal that you would be proud to serve at your own dinner table. Often staff at CFCs who eat their lunch there say that this meal tends to be the best one of their day. This is a great testimonial to the quality of the food.

*“It gets me a variety of things to eat. Things that I would never try that I haven’t had before. Like I never knew that mint would go well with rice until I had it here.”*

— Participant at **The Table Community Food Centre**, Perth, ON

### **Secret Kale (and Squash, and Cauliflower...)**

While the most popular dishes in every Community Meal program tend to be traditional comfort food, the Community Chef can still endeavour to maximize the nutritional content of every meal. You are aiming to challenge people’s palates a little bit at the same time as you promote healthy food. Like it says in our Good Food Rules (Appendix H), chefs strive “to find the terrain where nutritious meet delicious” always tinkering with the menu in order to get to this sweet spot.



*Chef Judy Dempsey’s menus strive to balance familiar foods with the more adventurous.*



## MY BEST MEAL

“It’s more subtle when things go right than when they go wrong. If there’s a blunder in the kitchen or a meal misses the mark, it’s pretty hard to miss. But it’s really important to take note of when things do fall into place.

Often, the best meals happen when volunteers work like clockwork — when they have the right mix of experience and interest, take in new volunteers well, and function with just a little guidance and little stress.

When a meal goes right, I usually can’t tell until the end. Sometimes, when I’m not expecting it, as participants are socializing after a meal and starting to filter out of the building, people will come up to me and compliment the meal. Sometimes quite a few will do so and that’s when I know we hit the mark. I always try to pass those comments on to the volunteers and make a note of what was served. I’ll tuck that recipe away and next time it comes up we’ll try to improve it. There have been a few moments when a participant’s comment has really hit home with me. One gentleman came up to me after a meal that included a squash salad with pumpkin seeds and raisins and told me that when he first started coming to the meals, he thought my salads were all really weird. But after trying them he really enjoys them and looks forward to trying new ones. A mother of two



*Jordan Lassaline, formerly the Community Chef at The Local Community Food Centre*

young children told me how her daughter, age 7, said that she wanted to dress up as a chef for Halloween that year and when she asked her why she told her, “Like that guy at The Local that feeds everybody.” It was a very touching moment and I’ve since become good friends with the mother through my cooking classes and gotten to know her children a bit.”

— *Jordan Lassaline, former Community Chef at The Local Community Food Centre*

For participants who have been unable to regularly access nutritious whole foods, or who might be used to sweet and salty processed foods, these meals can be unfamiliar, strange, or even repellent. At times, getting them to try new foods can require a little subterfuge. In summer 2013, The Stop and The Table saw a bumper crop of kale that forced them to integrate the nutritious leafy green in as many dishes as possible. Given diners’ relative unfamiliarity with, and, in some cases, outright hatred for the vegetable, the chefs puréed it and hid it in pasta and pizza sauce, or chopped it finely and mixed it with herbs or spinach. Eventually, as diners came to appreciate — or at least tolerate — it, kale was served raw in salad, softened and flavoured by vinaigrette. The same technique can be applied to other unpopular veggies like squash and cauliflower (camouflage it in mac ‘n’ cheese!). The point is not to force people to eat foods that they don’t like, but rather to introduce them to foods they may not have tried and to show them that

it can be delicious.

Getting participants to try different foods is sometimes simply a matter of gentle misdirection. Every CFC dining room has a menu board of some kind, whether a whiteboard or blackboard, and here it’s possible to describe a meal in a way that’s enticing and accessible — and without scaring diners off. For example, why call lasagna or chili without meat “vegetarian” when people may not even notice the lack of meat if it is delicious enough? Why not simply re-name something that sounds uncomfortably unfamiliar? Or describe the vegetable portion of a meal as “roasted veggies and greens” rather than calling attention to items like squash and beets that people might associate with childhood disgust. Occasionally omitting specific ingredients is the safest policy — there might be squash in the corn muffins, but diners don’t necessarily need to know that. It can be a place to reassure participants that the chili being served is “not spicy” or to encourage them to ask



Decorated by local volunteer artists, The Stop's Food of the Month chalkboard features seasonal produce that is put on higher rotation in meals, hampers, community kitchens, and food demonstrations.

questions about a meal.

There are other ways to share nutritional information, often in tandem with other programs. The Local offers cooking classes, while at The Stop, a targeted donation enables funds to be set aside for a Food of the Month. This particular food — let's say broccoli — is available in Food Bank hampers, and used in meals, community kitchens, and food demonstrations. Broccoli recipes are made available to participants at the Food Bank (both on printed flyers and on the website) and, through the meals, diners learn new ways the food can be prepared and enjoyed in their own kitchens. Information about each Food of the Month is shared more informally, too, with servers and animators in the dining room always available to answer questions.

Of course, communication needs to be two-way. You should also give participants a forum through which they can provide feedback to the kitchen. Conversation with servers, animators, and chefs can allow for this,

of course, but a formal comment box is a tried-and-true method. At The Local, many comments are posted publicly, with the kitchen providing helpful, contextual answers to questions like, “Why did you put carrots in the banana bread?” (Answer: to increase the fiber content of the dessert.) Since The Local started doing this about a year ago, negative comments have almost completely disappeared, and the amount of uneaten food going back to the kitchen has dropped.



## RELATED RESOURCES

**Good Food Rules** (Appendix H)







# SLOW-RISING DOUGH: HOW TO MAKE CHEAP MEALS

The number of people served at each Community Meal program varies from organization to organization and from meal to meal, depending on the time of month, weather, and other free meals available in the community. Even with those fluctuating factors, the ideal per-meal cost is, at most, \$2 a plate. Hitting that price point isn't always easy, but it can be made less difficult if there are lots of useable leftovers from a previous meal, food diverted from another program (produce market, etc.), or significant donations. A meal that costs nothing will compensate for a more elaborate expensive one. Purchasing cheaper meats, using more dry beans or more common ingredients can also help cut costs. As with any budget, it's advisable to accurately track spending. Log everything purchased and, if you find yourself going over budget, adjust future meals accordingly. This tracking can take considerable time at first but is vital.

*The ideal per-meal cost is,  
at most, \$2 a plate.*

Getting the biggest bang for your buck in the kitchen is second nature for most chefs (and, of course, many non-professional cooks) — and largely common sense. If budget permits only a small serving of meat, it can be supplemented with quinoa, legumes, and iron-rich vegetables like chard. CFC chefs strive to ensure portions are sufficient but not large, and they try not to only offer second helpings once everyone has been served. At The Table, Dempsey likes to offer children second portions of salad — they're growing, after all! Water, milk, coffee and tea are ideal beverages to serve at meals, while juice makes a rarer appearance as it is expensive and high in sugar. (At The Local, they decided not to skimp on the coffee served and managed to secure a local supplier of fair-trade coffee to avoid perpetuating elsewhere the economic problems they're trying to combat in Stratford.) Here are a few other nuggets of good advice from CFC chefs:

- instead of making two hundred steaks, you can use that same meat in many more burgers and stews;
- don't order too much and seek out value;
- stock up on in-season and on-sale produce and preserve it;
- buy a lot of something if it's on sale; and
- be creative with your leftovers.

## MAKING THE SWITCH FROM HAUTE CUISINE

Like most Community Chefs, Grant Mitchell came to the NorWest Co-op CFC in Winnipeg as a veteran of the restaurant industry. While his skill set prepared him for the more technical side of running NorWest's kitchen, there was plenty that set the community space apart from his former workplace. In addition to swapping out a world of inflated egos and fine dining delicacies for the dynamic, community-engagement approach of the Community Food Centre, his food budget shrank considerably from what he was used to. But creating healthy, delicious meals for his target \$1.50 a plate has been a challenge he revels in.

To make the most of his budget, Mitchell will ask suppliers if they have any "last cases" of produce that, because of limited volume or mild blemishes, won't otherwise get sold. He acquired an \$8 case of fresh fennel and a \$6 case of rainbow carrots this way. He'll also make sure to even out the meal costs through the course of the week. For example, a more expensive lunch featuring premium ingredients like red peppers or chicken might be balanced by a cheap and cheerful meal of soup, salad, and homemade bread.

All in all, Mitchell finds the CFC's lack of opulence freeing. "There's less pressure to make something extravagant, and there's a new kind of creative freedom that comes with working so closely with the community."



## RELATED RESOURCES

**Good Food Rules** (Appendix H)

**Sample Budget for Small Kitchen Items**  
(Appendix I)





# PRESSURE COOKER: HOW TO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the bedrock of most nonprofit organizations. This is no more so than in the Community Meal program — it would be impossible to make meals so cheaply without the gift of labour volunteers provide. So it's important to provide a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable work environment for them.

The number of volunteers required in each Community Meal program depends on the size of the kitchen and the number of meals being made — anywhere between four and twelve. It's invaluable to have at least one or two volunteers per shift with some cooking experience who can support other volunteers and share their knowledge. More important than cooking experience, however, are a sense of humour, curiosity, and openness. In some cases, a kitchen volunteer crew can be comprised of people with a wide swath of skill sets: a couple of participants with developing kitchen skills, a former line cook, a retired teacher and current donor who's great with a pork chop but less great with chard, a university student who's passionate about food issues but not agile with a knife. You can start to see how even the most dedicated volunteer team can be a handful to manage. Regardless of your volunteers' experience, skill set, or socio-economic background, you want them to feel comfortable, that their skills are being put to use, and that they're having a good time.

To a great extent, volunteers will determine what jobs are most appropriate for them, depending on their own interest. At The Local, the chef canvasses volunteers when they first arrive, telling them what

meal they're making, outlining the most pressing jobs (chopping onions, getting the banana bread in the oven, etc.) and then allowing them to choose which jobs they want to do. Once the most pressing jobs are out of the way, there's a longer list of smaller tasks they can take on as they become available. Some volunteers are entirely content to spend their shift washing dishes or peeling potatoes, while others are more ambitious. All volunteers who'll be using a knife are taught proper knife skills. The Community Chef may not always have the time to adequately do this, so other knowledgeable volunteers can be encouraged to provide this training. If there's time, it's often very helpful to pair up a new volunteer (one who's not needed on that shift) with a more experienced one and let the new person shadow them. That way they can learn without any real pressure.

*Regardless of your volunteers' experience, skill set, or socio-economic background, you want them to feel comfortable, that their skills are being put to use, and that they're having a good time.*



*Many of The Stop's volunteers first got involved as program participants.*



Much of this training is trial-by-fire and casual — sometimes, a chef will correct a volunteer because they need a component of the meal to be precise, and other times, if a mistake won't harm a diner's experience, they'll allow the volunteer to learn from their mistakes. At the very least, volunteers should be trained in basic hand-washing, what kind of clothes to wear, and how to keep their hair tucked away. All volunteers need to be taught basic kitchen safety commands — “behind,” “hot,” “sharp,” etc. — to avoid accidents. More dangerous jobs are usually the chef's domain, or that of the most experienced volunteers (at The Table, for example, Dempsey is the only one who gets to use the meat-slicer).

Another good thing to remember is to bring your volunteers in early enough to give them enough time to prepare the meal but not so early that they become bored or burn out. While every chef operates his/her kitchen in a unique way, you want to aim for it to be a challenging, dynamic, and inspiring place. Volunteers will take pride in the fact that they've created a beautiful, tasty meal for hundreds of people in just a few hours. While a more institutional approach, where the bulk of a meal is made by the chef in advance, might be more efficient, such efficiency forfeits a lot of the spontaneity and creativity that captures the imagination of volunteers. Also, there will be days when volunteers are ill, or just fail to show up, and you'll have to quickly simplify your meal. If using a restaurant model, you might work three days in advance, but with the volunteer-engagement model, you don't want to prep too much beforehand. Things that might take too long to make just before the meal —

*Volunteers will take pride  
in the fact that they've  
created a beautiful, tasty meal  
for hundreds of people in just  
a few hours.*

the bolognese and béchamel sauce for lasagna, perhaps — can be made ahead of time by the chef. Onions and potatoes can be peeled and chopped by volunteers. Try to balance the amount of prep for future meals against the amount of clean-up time from just completed meals: at The Table, Dempsey usually devotes about an hour to prep on her own, plus three hours prepping the meal, dining room, and signage with volunteers. Volunteers then spend about 30 minutes after each meal on clean up.

Inevitably, the process of creating a Community Meal, week in, week out, gives way to great camaraderie between volunteers. Just like on any sports team, you don't want to let your teammates down. To further foster this team spirit, you can encourage volunteers to sit down and eat the meal together after it's been served. You can also host volunteer appreciation events, or thank volunteers in other ways, for example by cooking up a special dish.

While volunteers can be given jobs that reflect their interest, not every kitchen is going to have someone who loves doing dishes or taking out the garbage. In an ideal world, there would be a budget to hire a dishwasher. Though this is often not the case, the relative value of a hired dishwasher should not be underestimated. If the chef is the engine of a kitchen, the dishwasher is the drivetrain — when not doing dishes, they're cleaning and organizing

## Top 5 Cooking Skills

What anyone working in a kitchen should know.

1. Knife skills: How to hold the knife, types of knives, basic cutting techniques, knife safety.
2. How to make a basic vinaigrette.
3. How to make a mirepoix and other flavour bases for soups.
4. How to cook meat (braising, slow roasting, etc.).
5. How to cut up a chicken.

## What to Do When Your Volunteers Don't Show Up

First of all, don't freak out. Second, hope you saved your leftovers! Given the fluctuating attendance at many Community Meals, you should have a good selection of leftovers. These can be used to make a meal if you don't have any or enough volunteers, if a delivery is late, or if you want to simply take a day off. Another easy way out is soup: you can throw almost any kind of vegetable in a pot with some sweated onion and garlic, a couple of potatoes and it will purée to smooth, creamy, and nutritious soup.

Alternatively, when you have a bit of extra time and/or an extra volunteer, you can double up on a bread or dessert recipe that you can then freeze and serve later when you're in a pinch. You can wash and freeze berries, roast some squash, or if you have a kitchen garden, you can always pick some herbs to make a pesto for freezing. As always, the kitchen can be a bit chaotic — volunteers can be unreliable, and donations can be dropped on you at the last minute — so it's always best to assume, and try to plan for, unwanted surprises.



*Many volunteers keep coming back, making friends, learning new skills, and offering valuable support to newer teammates in the kitchen.*

the rest of the kitchen. If there isn't budget, or someone who happens to thrive on these tasks, all volunteers can equally share more menial tasks (recognizing that the work is a group effort, they rarely complain).

Try to keep your eyes open for volunteers with exceptional ability and ambitions. These volunteers, especially if they've been active at your organization for some time, can be given more responsibility — producing a lunch, for example — or operational instruction (how to order supplies, plan meals, etc.). That way, they might be available to cover for a chef who's sick or going on vacation. In many cases, chefs who typically have strong ties to the

restaurant community will enlist friendly professional chefs to cover their shifts when on holiday, but a good, committed, longstanding volunteer may be able to fill this role as well.



## RELATED RESOURCES

**Designing a Volunteer Position** (Appendix K)

**Program Staff Responsibilities for Volunteers** (Appendix L)

**Supporting Volunteers** (Appendix M)







# STARTING FROM SCRATCH: SETTING UP AND MAINTAINING A KITCHEN

Whether your kitchen is purpose-built from scratch or shoehorned into existing structures, a few best practices govern kitchen design:

- Bigger is not necessarily better. A small, well-designed kitchen is more efficient and easier to work in than a large one with appliances that are incorrectly or illogically arranged. (Though if you're also running a community kitchen, keep in mind that you'll probably need to accommodate groups of 15 or so.)
- Try not to locate a kitchen so that people have to pass through it to get to other areas of the building.
- While it's not typical of a commercial kitchen design, a large central kitchen island can be useful for creating meals with volunteers and helpful in community kitchen programs, as it allows the chef to easily observe volunteers.
- The stove should be the focus of the room and all other appliances efficiently placed in relation to it in order to minimize the amount of travel to and from other appliances/storage/etc.
- The dish pit needs to be very accessible, and located close to the stove, though you shouldn't have to pass by the stove to access it.
- The dish pit should have three separate sinks so that dishes can be washed in one sink, and pots and pans in another.
- Given the choice, buy high-quality used equipment rather than lower-quality new equipment.
- Don't purchase too much equipment right away. Buy things slowly, as you learn what your programs need — and research what other equipment may be donated.
- If possible, don't purchase gas stoves with open burners. Not only do they generate more heat, oven mitts are more readily burned and pans and pots will get hot even if the stove's not on.
- Maximize work surface area.
- Open, stainless-steel shelving keeps ingredients visible and accessible, and are less likely to harbour insects and other pests.
- Under-counter refrigeration is very useful so that foods can be stored close to the stove.

Again, every kitchen is different and every chef has his/her preferences, but there are some key pieces of equipment that you'll ideally have in your kitchen:

1. Commercial stove and two-door oven, with six-foot grill
2. Dishwasher
3. Tilt kettle
4. Industrial steamer/steam tray
5. Mixer
6. Good-sized coffee maker (for volume and speed, an air pot or gravity pot are preferred)

## Maintenance

Good, regular kitchen maintenance is absolutely crucial, but given the time pressures already on Community Chefs, it's not always something they can perform. Many appliance manufacturers will provide some kind of maintenance and/or cleaning service and, depending on budget and time, chefs will strike a balance between outside and in-house labour. Every staff member who is using the community kitchen should be instructed on the proper use and maintenance of all equipment. (Volunteers should not be cleaning or maintaining any equipment.) Training small groups (usually no more than two people at a time) is recommended, and those



*In an open kitchen layout like the one at The Local CFC, prep stations double as serving areas.*



staffers can be given regular maintenance duties to ensure they've absorbed the information. A detailed, illustrated kitchen manual can be provided to all staff who undergo this training. Chefs can expect to have to perform occasional equipment repairs themselves (particularly plumbing). Routine maintenance will vary depending on the equipment you have, as well as maintenance schedules with manufacturers, number of meals being prepared, etc., but here are some good equipment maintenance rules of thumb:

- **Stove and oven**

Take the stove apart and clean it, ideally once a week. Oven should be cleaned on a similar schedule.

- **Range hood**

Remove and clean range hood louvers every two weeks (or at least no less than monthly) and clean and scrub hood monthly. Cleaning the louvers should only take about 15-20 minutes of active time and is just a matter of soaking and then running through the dishwasher. (It'll take a lot longer if you don't keep to this schedule.) If time is an issue, there are companies available to clean the louvers.

- **Dishwasher**

De-scale the machine no less than once every three months (some do it every month, even every week). Once a month, take the spray arms apart and make sure they're not clogged. The company that provides dishwashing chemicals may also provide routine maintenance.

- **Grease trap**

Most municipalities require grease traps to be cleaned on a regular basis. (In Toronto, for instance, it's bi-weekly.) External companies provide this service.

- **Pest control**

Depending on need, this should be performed weekly or bi-weekly.

- **Miscellaneous**

Rotational maintenance should be performed on all fridges (monthly) and oven/stoves (annually). If available and necessary, a staff member should mop floors at the end of the night, take out garbage and recycling, and make sure garbage cans and recycling bins are kept clean and free of pests. Linen services are available to clean aprons and rags.

## Working with Public Health

While every municipality's public health unit operates somewhat differently, they are generally consistent around issues of food safety and first-aid. The health unit is your ally and there to help; look to them if you have questions and to lead you. When setting up a kitchen, you'll have to submit your design plan to the health unit for approval and they will guide you in the placement of proper hand-washing facilities, separate food preparation sinks, appropriate dishwashing sinks, etc. Temperatures will be checked on all fridges and dishwashers. (In its first year of operation, The Table logged its own fridge temperatures daily.) The rating of your facility will determine the number of times your kitchen is inspected. (The Local, for instance, is rated a "second-level facility" because it prepares food from fresh, raw product.) Volunteers can be responsible for ensuring hand soap, paper towels, and dishwashing chemicals are properly stocked. The public health unit should provide signage around proper food-handling and cleaning practices. As that signage is typically not enough, it's also helpful for the Community Chef to orient staff and volunteers who are new to the kitchen and to consciously monitor proper practices as best they can. Everyone sometimes forgets to wash hands properly or put something away — gentle reminders from anyone, be they chef, staff, or volunteer, who observe such lapses are helpful. Depending on the size of your organization, comprehensive first-aid training may not be necessary, but it is certainly useful to always have at least one staff member and volunteer on hand at all times who does have such training. An appointed health and safety officer can help your organization ensure it follows all regulations.



## RELATED RESOURCES

### Sample Budget for Small Kitchen Items

(Appendix I)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our sincerest thanks goes out to the Community Chefs who generously told us their stories and imparted their kitchen wisdom in the writing of this manual — Scott MacNeil (The Stop CFC), Judy Dempsey (The Table CFC), Jordan Lassaline (formerly of The Local CFC), Grant Mitchell (NorWest Co-op CFC), and Ronald Cockburn (Regent Park CFC).

We would also like to extend a hearty thanks to Jason McBride who did the bulk of research and writing for the manual.

First rooted in the experience of The Stop, this guide has evolved to incorporate the unique experiences of The Table and The Local Community Food Centres. We look forward to continuing to tell the story of the Community Meal program as more CFCs are developed.

## RESOURCES

The Stop generously shared the following resources: Appendix B — 10 Tips On Running a Drop-in Meal Program; Appendix D — Meal Log Template; Appendix E — Sample Weekly Menu; Appendix G — Inventory List; Appendix K — Designing a Volunteer Position; Appendix L — Program Staff Responsibilities for Volunteers; and Appendix M — Supporting Volunteers. The Local CFC provided Appendix I — Sample Budget for Large and Small Kitchen Items.

## PHOTO CREDITS

Thank you to the talented photographers whose images appear throughout the manual:

**Zoe Alexopoulos** (for The Stop Community Food Centre)

**Judy Dempsey, Sarah Edmunson, and David Zimmerly** (for The Table Community Food Centre)

**Terry Manzo** (for The Local Community Food Centre)

**Emily Van Halem** (for Community Food Centres Canada)

**Ultima Foods** (for Dartmouth North Community Food Centre)

Photo credits by page, listed from top left to bottom right:

Cover: Alexopoulos, Manzo, Ultima Foods,  
Zimmerly, Alexopoulos

2: Zimmerly, Zimmerly, Manzo

4: Alexopoulos, Edmunson, Zimmerly, Manzo

5: Alexopoulos

8: Alexopoulos, Manzo, Edmunson, Alexopoulos

9: Edmunson

10: Zimmerly

12: Zimmerly, Zimmerly, Manzo, Manzo

13: Alexopoulos

15: Zimmerly, Dempsey, Zimmerly, Dempsey

16: Manzo

17: The Stop Community Food Centre / @thestopcfc

18: Van Halem, Alexopoulos, Alexopoulos, Van Halem

20: Alexopoulos, Alexopoulos, Van Halem

21: Alexopoulos

23: Edmunson

24: Alexopoulos, Ultima Foods, Alexopoulos,  
Alexopoulos, Alexopoulos, Manzo

25: Manzo

28: Van Halem, Ultima Foods, Van Halem, Zimmerly,  
Ultima Foods

30-37: iStock / Getty Images







# RECIPES

While most chefs don't work from recipes, and some recipes don't necessarily scale up or down, having recipes handy for participants, volunteers, and staff is very helpful. The following are a few favourites that display the wide variety of meals found at CFCs, all of which use inexpensive ingredients and common techniques. They can be scaled accordingly up to meet the size of your Community Meal program.

<b>Colcannon Soup</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Carrot and Rice Soup</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Cabbage Pancakes</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Cajun Meatloaf</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chicken Satay</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Magic Meatballs</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Picadillo-stuffed Sweet Potatoes</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Herb-crusting Vegetarian Pizza</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Chickpea Patties</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Wild Rice Johnnycakes</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Summer Bean Salad</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Savoury Cornbread</b>	<b>41</b>



# Colcannon Soup

**SOURCE:** NORWEST CO-OP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 12+ SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 2 yellow onions
- 4 bay leaves
- Sprig of fresh thyme
- 8 potatoes (yellow or red), washed or peeled, boiled, and mashed (set the boil water aside for later)
- 2 heads of kale, washed, stemmed, and chopped
- ¼ cup roasted garlic paste
- 1 bunch of green onions, finely chopped
- 1 bunch of parsley, finely chopped
- 1 apple, diced

## Method

1. To prep the garlic paste, pop two heads of garlic into oven at 350°F for a ½ hour or so, or until soft. Slip cloves out of their skin and mash with the broad side of a knife.
2. Cut the yellow onions into four and place in a pot. Add enough water in the pot to cover the onions, add the bay leaves and thyme, set to boil, and then simmer. Once the onions are soft, remove the bay leaves and thyme.
3. Purée the onion and water in a food processor until smooth, or strain the onions (saving the water) and chop them finely.
4. Combine mashed potato, hot potato water, onion purée, kale, roasted garlic, green onions, and parsley and stir until combined.
5. Top with apples.



# Carrot and Rice Soup

**SOURCE:** THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 70 SERVINGS

## Ingredients (Carrot Soup)

- 10 onions, sliced
- 2 heads of garlic, chopped
- 25 lbs carrots, peeled and sliced
- ½ cup coarsley grated ginger
- Dash of ground cumin
- Vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

## Ingredients (Mint Yogurt)

- 1 litre of plain yogurt
- 2 bunches mint leaves, chopped
- Lime juice to taste
- Salt to taste

## To garnish

- About 4 litres cooked brown rice (from about 1 to 1 ½ litres raw rice)
- Something crunchy if you've got time: toasted pumpkin seeds or croutons

## Method:

1. In a large stock pot, sweat the onions in vegetable oil until they are very soft and sweet. Then add the garlic, ginger, and cumin, stirring to combine. Cook for another two or three minutes to soften the flavour of the ginger and garlic. Add the sliced carrots and enough water to cover. Bring to a simmer and let it cook until the carrots are very tender. The amount of time they will need will depend on how thinly they are cut.
2. When the carrots are very soft, purée the soup using a large immersion blender. Season to taste with salt.
3. Prepare the mint yogurt by stirring all the yogurt ingredients together in a bowl.
4. To serve, spoon about a ¼ cup of brown rice into the side of the bowl. Ladle the soup into the opposite side. Pour a little dollop of the mint yogurt close to, but not covering the rice — close enough that it's not stranded out there in the middle of the soup. Whatever you do, if you've managed to keep the rice visible, don't cover it up. If executed correctly, the dish should look like a grassy iceberg about to collide with Hawaii in an orange ocean. Feel free to put your own spin on it though — express yourself. Oh, and add something crunchy if you have the time, like some toasted pumpkin seeds!



# Cabbage Pancakes

**SOURCE:** THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 6 PANCAKES

## Ingredients

- 2 cups chopped, blanched green cabbage
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup rice flour or corn starch
- 6 scallions, finely chopped or 1 red onion
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup grated cold butter
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme
- 1 cup ice water
- 10 ½ tbsp canola oil
- Kosher salt to taste

## Method

1. Combine cabbage, flour, rice flour, scallions, egg, and one cup ice-cold water in a bowl; whisk to combine. Set aside to rest for 10 minutes.
2. Working in batches, heat 1 ½ tbsp oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat; scoop four 2-tbsp portions of batter into skillet; flatten each portion with the back of a spoon. Cook until edges are crisp, about two minutes. Flip pancakes; cook until set, about two minutes. Transfer pancakes to paper towels and wipe out skillet after each batch. Serve sprinkled with salt.

## Notes

- Freeze leftovers for a healthy meal later.
- Don't be intimidated by the list of ingredients. If you're missing something, that's ok. Use whatever vegetables and ingredients that you have on hand and are in season/fresh.
- This is an extremely popular lunch item. Serve with sausage, cabbage stew, and rice. Yum, cabbage!

# Cajun Meatloaf

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE (ADAPTED FROM PAUL PRUDHOMME)

**YIELD:** 8 SERVINGS

## Ingredients (Seasoning Mix)

- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg

## Ingredients (Meatloaf)

- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- ¾ cup finely chopped onion
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- ½ cup finely chopped green bell pepper
- ¼ cup finely chopped green onion
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup evaporated milk
- ½ cup ketchup
- 2 lbs ground beef
- 2 lbs ground pork
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup breadcrumbs

## Method

1. Combine the seasoning mix ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.
2. Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat.
3. Add the onions, celery, green peppers, green onions, garlic, Worcestershire, and seasoning mix and sauté until mixture starts sticking excessively, about six minutes, stirring occasionally and scraping the pan bottom well.
4. Stir in the milk and ketchup.
5. Continue cooking for about two minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Remove from heat until cool enough to handle.
7. Place ground beef and pork in a bowl.
8. Add the eggs, cooked vegetable mixture, and breadcrumbs. Mix by hand until thoroughly combined.
9. Bake uncovered at 350°F for 25 minutes, then raise heat to 400°F and continue to cook until done, about 35 minutes longer.
10. Cool for 15 minutes and serve with a tomato sauce or creamy mushroom sauce.





**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 6-8 SERVINGS

### Ingredients (Marinated Chicken)

- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- ¼ cup molasses or sweet soy sauce
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 1 tbsp chopped garlic
- ½ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp madras curry powder
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut in strips

### Ingredients (Peanut Sauce)

- 1 cup chopped onions
- 2 tbsp minced garlic
- 4-6 tbsp red curry paste
- 3-5 tbsp lime juice
- 3 cups rich coconut milk
- 2 cups crunchy peanut butter
- Palm or brown sugar to taste
- Fish sauce to taste
- 1 cup finely chopped cilantro leaves

### Method (Marinated Chicken)

1. Combine ingredients for marinade.
2. Coat the chicken with marinade and set aside one hour or overnight.
3. Refrigerate unused marinade. (It will keep for three weeks.)
4. Skewer chicken, grill, and serve with peanut sauce.

### Method (Peanut Sauce)

1. Sauté onions and garlic in a small amount of vegetable oil until cooked but not brown.
2. Stir in curry paste and cook another two minutes.
3. Add lime juice, coconut milk, peanut butter, and blend over a low heat.
4. Add cilantro.
5. Add sugar and fish sauce to taste.
6. Add water if the sauce is too thick.



# Magic Meatballs

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 30 SMALL MEATBALLS

## Ingredients

- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp salt
- Pinch of ground pepper
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- 1 tbsp minced fresh parsley
- 1 large tsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp very finely minced green onion

## Method

1. Mix all ingredients together with clean hands until mixture is completely blended.
2. Divide mixture into three equal piles.
3. Divide each pile into 10 little balls, to equal 30 total.
4. Spread on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
5. Bake at 375°F for 15-20 minutes or until firm.



# Picadillo-stuffed Sweet Potatoes

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 4 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 4 sweet potatoes, washed
- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- ¼ cup raisins
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tsp chopped green chilies (canned)
- Pinch of ground cloves and ground cinnamon
- Salt and pepper
- Shredded cheddar cheese
- Plain yogurt

## Method

1. Wrap sweet potatoes in foil and bake at 400°F for 50 minutes or until soft. Set aside to cool slightly.
2. Brown meat in a heavy frying pan.
3. Add onion and garlic, cook another five minutes.
4. Add raisins, apple, tomatoes, chilies, and spices.
5. Simmer, uncovered about 15 minutes.
6. Season with salt and pepper.
7. Split the sweet potatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out a few spoonfuls.
8. Mix the scooped sweet potato into the meat mixture.
9. Fill the potato shells with the mixture and top with cheese.
10. Bake another 15-30 minutes or until cheese is melted.
11. Top with a spoonful of plain yogurt and serve.



# Herb-crusted Vegetarian Pizza

**SOURCE:** REGENT PARK COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 8-10 SERVINGS

## Ingredients (Garlic and Chives Dough)

- 4 cups flour (2 ½ cups whole wheat & 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour)
- 1 pkg (7 ml) instant yeast
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 ¼-1 ½ cups of warm water
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp fresh chives

## Ingredients (Toppings)

- 2-3 cups pizza sauce spiced with ½ tsp thyme, ½ tsp oregano, ½ tsp marjoram, and ½ tsp dry mustard
- ¾ cup spinach leaves
- 2-4 cups shredded cheese blend (at a 4:1:1 ratio of mozzarella, asiago, and old cheddar)
- ¼ cup roasted eggplant
- ¼ cup roasted zucchini
- ¼ cup sliced mushrooms
- ¼ cup chopped broccoli
- ½ cup chopped or sliced tri-colour sweet peppers (yellow, orange, and red)
- 1/8 tsp salt and ground pepper (optional)

## Method

1. In a small bowl, mix and sift flour and add salt and yeast. Make a well in the centre of the flour, add minced garlic and chives, then slowly add warm water. Mix with a wooden spoon, add olive oil and mix until it forms a ball. Knead the dough for about 8-10 minutes until it is soft and elastic but not too sticky. Add more flour if needed.
2. Put the dough in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and leave in a warm place for about one hour, until it doubles in size.
3. Preheat the oven to 475°F.
4. Divide the dough into fourths and roll each piece to desired thickness. Transfer to oiled baking sheet(s).
5. Spread the tomato sauce evenly over dough, then add all the toppings, finishing with the cheese.
6. Season with optional salt and pepper if the sauce is unseasoned.
7. Bake for 10-15 minutes until the cheese is melted and the crust is golden brown.





# Chickpea Patties

**SOURCE:** NORWEST CO-OP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** ABOUT 12 PATTIES

## Ingredients

- 4 x 540 ml cans of chickpeas
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 2 tbsp fresh garlic, chopped
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- 4 eggs
- 1 tbsp salt
- 2 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp kasoori mehti (see notes)
- ½ cup nutritional yeast
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- Oil for frying onions, sunflower or cold-pressed canola
- ½ cup+ flour and/or extra egg as needed
- Chopped fresh herbs such as parsley, thyme, and/or cilantro (optional)

## Method

1. Pulse chickpeas in food processor or crush by hand so they're broken and rough.
2. Sauté onions in oil with black pepper until soft. Add garlic and continue cooking until slightly browned. Let cool.
3. Combine all ingredients except fresh herbs and flour in a large bowl. Mix thoroughly, adding flour or extra egg until it sticks together, but not so much that it gets doughy.
4. Oil a frying pan and heat to medium temperature, frying a small piece in the pan to test for texture and seasoning.
5. Adjust seasoning as needed, adding the optional fresh herbs into the mixture at this point. Mix until combined.
6. In batches of three or four, scoop the mixture with a two-ounce ice cream scoop into a well-oiled frying pan, and gently form into patties by pushing down on top with a heat-proof spatula. Cook on medium heat, watching edges for golden colour. Once golden, flip and crisp the other side.
7. Continue until mix is done. Cooked patties freeze well for future use.

## Notes

Most ingredients can be substituted with another of its kind, e.g. lentils for chickpeas, olive oil for sesame. The recipe also lends itself well to using up leftover rice, beans, oatmeal, roasted vegetables, etc. Just make sure to maintain the ratio of breadcrumbs and eggs to the remaining ingredients as they bind everything together.

Kasoori mehti are dried fenugreek leaves found in East Indian groceries, and sometime larger retailers. They have a wonderful, deep, and unique flavour that is bitter like celery, powerful like oregano, but with an almost buttery presence. A good North American substitution would be summer savory.

# Wild Rice Johnnycakes

**SOURCE:** NORWEST CO-OP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 4-6 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- ¼ cup corn flour
- ¼ cup corn meal
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 cup buttermilk
- ½ cup cooked wild rice
- Plus butter and sunflower oil for the pan

## Method

1. Combine the dry ingredients and mix well.
2. Add the egg, buttermilk, and cooked rice. Stir until combined, but do not over-mix.
3. Let the batter sit for 5-10 minutes, until bubbles appear.
4. Heat a non-stick or cast-iron skillet on medium heat. Add one tsp butter and one tbsp sunflower oil and wait until butter stops foaming.
5. Ladle batter into pan, either making one or a few smaller cakes.
6. Wait until bubbles appear and pop on the surface, and check the underside for crispiness and a golden colour. Flip and cook for two more minutes.
7. Repeat steps 4-6 until all the johnnycakes are cooked.
8. Plate and garnish with desired accompaniments. Try frozen blueberries warmed in a pan with some maple syrup or fruit juice with a dollop of cottage cheese, liberally covered in toasted oats and hemp seeds.





# Summer Bean Salad

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 8 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 2 cups green beans, trimmed and cut into 1" lengths
- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 can red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium red onion, finely chopped
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh herbs of your choice, chopped (mint, basil, parsley, dill, tarragon and/or cilantro)
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup white vinegar
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper

## Method

1. Steam green beans until tender. Cool in cold water and drain.
2. Toss all beans with onions, herbs, and pepper.
3. Combine oil, vinegar, and sugar. Toss with beans.
4. Chill at least four hours or overnight.
5. Before serving, stir in salt and check for seasoning.

# Savoury Cornbread

**SOURCE:** REGENT PARK COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 250 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 25 cups cornmeal
- 22 cups flour
- 8 ½ cups sugar
- 1 ½ cups baking powder
- 5 tbsp salt
- 1 tsp mace or ground nutmeg
- 11 cups milk
- 10 cups yogurt (2%)
- 20 eggs, well beaten
- ¾ cup canola oil
- 4 cups Monterey Jack cheese
- 2-4 cups jalapeño pepper

## Method

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and mace. Make a well in the centre of the dry mixture. Set aside.
2. In another bowl, combine milk, yogurt, and canola oil. Add egg mixture to the dry mixture then add cheese and jalapeño peppers. Stir until moistened.
3. Spoon batter into greased pan(s), bake at 425°F for about 20 to 25 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the centre of the bread comes out clean.



## GOOD FOOD PRINCIPLES

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

### 1. Taking action from the individual to the systemic — food access, food skills, and civic engagement

The poverty and food issues we see manifested in low-income communities have multi-faceted and complex causes and solutions, and there is thus power in individual-level to systemic-level approaches. We believe that all people have the right to the basics of a dignified life: a decent income, housing and employment, access to healthy food. Together we need to fight for these rights and create opportunities for those affected to make their voices heard. Until we achieve these goals, we can work to help meet basic needs in the short term and to maximize the choices available to people by providing them with skills that enable them to choose, grow, and prepare good food. Offering programs that span the range of access, skills, and engagement on food and hunger creates relevance and multiple points of connection, while creating the potential for a critical mass of staff and programs.

### 2. Believing and investing in the power of good food

We believe good food has the power to build health, connect people, and inspire people to become engaged in issues that matter to them. We strive to make good food a priority and to provide food through our programs that is delicious, healthy, sustainably produced, and pleasurable to eat.

### 3. Creating an environment of respect and community leadership

We believe that respect — for the inherent value, assets, and potential to contribute of all people — should underpin all of our work. Thus we strive to avoid the signs, symbols, and procedures that contribute to the stigma often experienced by people attending food programs in charitable organizations, and to positively communicate our respect for all participants through respectful procedures and inviting community involvement. We believe that people are healthiest and happiest when they are making their own choices, meeting their own needs, and contributing to their communities. We strive to empower those with lived experience of hunger and poverty with a platform to speak up against these issues and help others in the community who are struggling with them too. In addition, inviting community involvement breaks down the binary between the ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’ of charity so dominant in many emergency food programs.

### 4. Meeting people where they’re at

We work to meet people where they are at by recognizing and striving to meet the needs of participants at multiple levels in ways that are relevant to their actual circumstances. By recognizing that people’s skills and goals are diverse and that many bring their own assets to the table, in all areas we work with people toward self-identified change, without judging or preaching. We work to ensure that there is as much pleasure and value in the process of reaching individual and community goals as there is in reaching the outcome sought.

### 5. Aiming high for our organizations and our community

We believe that in order to do their important work, community food organizations need to be properly resourced. Volunteers are an important part of our work but cannot sustain the entire sector — private philanthropy and government must also play a role in supporting organizations that are properly staffed and funded to be able to create impact. In return, we believe in demonstrating our value by holding ourselves to a high standard of performance and impact.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## 10 TIPS ON RUNNING A DROP-IN MEAL PROGRAM

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

This document offers ten tips for running a Drop-in Meal program, from how to manage volunteers and volume to ingredients and planning.

**1. Be adaptable:** Flexibility is key when you're relying on donations, incorporating seasonality, and working with what's available or what needs to be used to prevent wastage.

**2. Have a back-up plan:** On occasion we've run out of the main meal on very busy days. The work doesn't stop once the cooking is done: always keep your eyes tuned to the quantity of food and number of participants and be ready to whip up a pasta or rice to stretch a meal if needed.

**3. Have FUN!** A positive volunteer experience is important. Having fun will keep people coming back week after week. We always play music, dance, have discussions, and talk celebrity gossip. It makes the food taste better and the kitchen a more vibrant place, and that energy feeds into other the areas of the Community Food Centre.

**4. Ingredient and influence:** Choose a key ingredient or a type of cuisine and let that influence the meal. You can focus on a protein or a vegetable that you have lots of, and then build that into a type of cuisine. For example if you have lot of cauliflower, kale, and potato and want to go with a Southeast Asian influence, you could make an aloo gobi roti. Of course, a different influence could have turned these same surplus ingredients into a number of different dishes.

**5. Engage volunteers:** Some folks are new to the kitchen but many have a whole host of culinary expertise. Celebrate their knowledge and put it to use. We've learned a ton from handing over the reins to community members in the kitchen. For others with less experience, we use teachable moments to further engage volunteers and help them sharpen their culinary skills.

**6. Go big:** When you have extra hands to help in the kitchen, make double so you can freeze a meal for a day when you have limited help or want a day off.

**7. Use leftovers:** Leftovers are like head starts — something that's already been prepared for the meal. It only takes a little creativity to transform yesterday's extras into an element of today's hit dish.

**8. Delegate and participate:** Cooking for 200 people is not something you should do alone. You have help for a reason so remember to delegate jobs. That said, your participation is what sets the tone; it shows volunteers the importance of a given task and also instructs them on how to do it.

**9. Mind the spice:** Some of us love the heat but when cooking for a crowd you have to accommodate everyone's tastes — often that means keeping the heat to a minimum.

**10. Veggies:** Jam as many vegetables as you can into whatever you're cooking. Our job is to provide the most hearty and nutritionally dense meal we can for our participants. Loading on the veggies is a great way to do this.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## SAMPLE COMMUNITY CHEF JOB DESCRIPTION

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

### Position Summary

[Blurb about your organization]

[Organization name] is looking for a talented, motivated chef to join our Community Food Centre team to provide leadership in our kitchen. The ideal candidate is someone who is passionate about good food, and wants to contribute to ensuring that everyone has access to it. S/he has an understanding of the power of food and the many positive impacts it can have: from supporting the health and social well-being of our community members, to building social ties to supporting local farmers. The Community Chef will be a great cook whose food models the principle that healthy food can also be delicious food. S/he will possess strong leadership skills balanced with an ability to create a supportive environment in the kitchen for a diverse team of volunteers, enabling them to hone their own food and leadership skills.

### Responsibilities

Oversee preparation of meals for our Community Meal program

- Plan menus for the Community Meal program that reflect our philosophy and commitment to healthy food
- Support and oversee team of staff and volunteers
- Provide leadership to the Community Meal preparation
- Provide basic training and instruction to volunteers
- Oversee health and safety in the kitchen

Coordination of the kitchen

- Source, order, and manage inventory of food for Community Meals and basic kitchen supplies
- Assist with sourcing of food for other community programs as needed
- Ensure high standard of health and safety in the kitchen space
- Oversee maintenance of equipment and resources in the kitchen
- Liaise with other users of our kitchen space to ensure standards and best practices are shared

Support cooking and nutrition education

- Support other program staff to develop cooking skills
- Engage in cooking demonstrations
- Advocate for healthy food in our community

Participate as a [Org. name] team member

- Attend staff meetings, training, events as needed
- Model professional behaviour and positive communication with participants, volunteers, and partners
- Promote culture of health and safety within our space
- Represent [Organization name] in the community
- Interview, screen, and supervise assigned placement students

### Qualifications and Experience

- 3 years of experience with large-scale food preparation and kitchen management
- Diploma in a related field of study (culinary, nutrition, social work) an asset
- Demonstrated ability to plan and prepare healthy, delicious meals for 150-250 people
- Experience with budgeting, sourcing food, and working with suppliers
- Experience working with volunteers and supervisory skills an asset
- Experience with program planning and evaluation

### Knowledge and Skills

- Commitment to and knowledge of food security issues, knowledge of nutrition
- Ability to work sensitively with people of diverse backgrounds who experience poverty/discrimination
- Experience with community/social services sector through work or volunteer experience an asset
- Patient with a good sense of humour and an ability to inspire and motivate others

**Organization:**

**Location:**

**Position type** [permanent/temporary/contract]:

**Hours:**

**Supervisor:**

**Salary:**



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## MEAL LOG TEMPLATE

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

<b>Name of Staff:</b>	<b>Date:</b>			
<b># Participants:</b>				
<b># Volunteers:</b>	<b># Vol. Hours:</b>			
<b>Description of menu:</b>	<b>Produce from the garden:</b>			
<b>Key Ingredients:</b>	<b>Quantity:</b>	<b>Local: Y/N</b>	<b>Organic: Y/N</b>	<b>Source:</b>
<b>Food Sources:</b>	<b>% of Meal:</b>			
	<b>Cost:</b>			
<b>Total:</b>				
<b>Kitchen Skills Imparted:</b>				
<b>Stories and Feedback:</b>				



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## SAMPLE WEEKLY MENU

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

Feb 24, 2014	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>Breakfast</b>	Boiled eggs Toast Cheese Yogurt Apples, oranges, pears	Molletes: Refried black beans, salsa, and cheese on English muffin Boiled egg Fruit salad		Granola banana split with yogurt and peach jam Fruit salad Toast Cheese	Big breakfast Scramble with onions, peppers, and cheese Roasted crispy home fries Chicken sausage Toast Fruit
<b>Lunch</b>	Kale and sweet potato gratin White kidney bean rosemary purée Green beans or broccoli/cauliflower (garlic, thyme, chili) Salad	Venison sausage stew in onion grainy mustard gravy with lentils and mashed potato Veg: Tofu and mushroom sausages Chickpea, cucumber salad	Sweet potato oven fries Greek salad Hummous Pita chips Tatziki	Senagalese sweet potato and peanut butter soup	Clean out the fridge
<b>Other programs</b>					
<b>Events</b>					
<b>Prep List</b>	Make salsa Pull grated cheddar from freezer Bake banana bread Pull venison sausage from freezer	Peel sweet potato		Dice potatoes (no steam) Crack eggs Slice peppers and onions Tray sausage if using pork	
<b>Ordering</b>	<b>No Frills:</b> <b>Hilite:</b> <b>Gasparos:</b> <b>Reliable:</b>	<b>100KM Foods:</b> The usual Milk <b>Reliable:</b> Coconut milk	<b>No Frills:</b> <b>Gasparos:</b> <b>Hilite:</b>	<b>Hilite:</b> Bananas Melons Oranges	



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## PUTTING OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT FOR COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

*This guide was developed for anyone who sources food for food programs, be they Community Meals, Good Food Markets, or Community Kitchens. Supporting local agriculture is an important part of the Community Food Centre model, so we created a guide to help staff navigate the sourcing, ordering, and ongoing communications needed to develop lasting relationships with local farmers.*

In order to thrive, local, sustainable food systems need localized investment and sustainable financial investment. Increasingly, consumers are heeding this call by frequenting farmers' markets, participating in 'community supported agriculture' programs, and calling for policies that support small-scale and ecologically sustainable farming.

Yet for individuals and families living on low incomes, high-quality local food is beyond what their budgets will allow. This is not to say that local food is too expensive; in fact, we believe that the price of food must reflect an investment in sustaining the land, the time taken to care for animals, and a living wage paid to workers. The overarching low cost of food throughout the food system has been made possible by unsustainable farming practices, factory farming, and underpaid labour. While these are large-scale problems in many ways requiring large-scale, policy-based solutions, there is still a significant role for consumers and institutional buyers to help support local food systems. We can do this by putting our money where our mouth is.

Community Food Centres (CFCs) and Good Food Organizations (GFOs) can play a role in improving access to fresh, local food by purchasing it for their hampers, community meals, and other programs. While those living on low incomes or social assistance may not be able to afford these foods in their daily life, gaining access through a community food program reflects the organization's commitment to providing good food for all, no matter their income.

Developing local procurement practices for CFCs and GFOs will help address both issues of accessibility and supply within the local food chain. It will also ensure higher-quality, more nutritious meals or hampers for those people accessing the organization's services. Because sourcing local food is sometimes complicated by the state of distribution infrastructure for smaller, sustainable farms, this document is primarily aimed at helping organizations jump ahead on the learning curve to anticipate challenges and plan accordingly.

CFCs and GFOs can also help by playing a role in promoting local food and helping others to understand that there is more to "value" in food than a cheap price tag. For those who can afford it, allocating more of their budgets to food that sustains farmers, the environment, and our food security is a worthwhile investment (one that has the added bonus of often meaning that the consumer is getting the most delicious and healthiest product).

Given the higher price of local, sustainable food, this may mean raising funds that are specifically earmarked for this purpose. For a segment of individual and corporate donors, this is a value worth supporting. One of the methods we have found successful for connecting this goal with a revenue source is the signature "Share the Health" fundraising event that features local chefs and farmers, offering a chance to promote local food and to raise money dedicated to purchasing local sustainable food.



DOWNLOAD

Download this appendix in full at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## INVENTORY LIST

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

Inventory ID	Name	Description	Unit Price	Quantity in Stock	Reorder Level	Reorder Time in Days	Quantity in Reorder
	<b>Flours</b>	AP		3x20kg	10kg	2	3x20kg
		Spelt		1x20kg	5kg	2	1x20kg
		Buckwheat		1x20kg	5kg	2	1x20kg
		Duram Atta		1x10kg	10kg	2	1x10kg
		Corn Meal		2x20kg	10kg	2	2x20kg
		Quick Oats		2x20kg	10kg	1	2x20kg
	Rice	Parboiled		1x40kg	10kg	1	1x40kg
		Brown		2x10kg	10kg	1	2x10kg
	Grains	Quino		2x10kg	0	2	2x10kg
		Grits		6x5kg	0	2	6x5kg
		Couscous		2xcase	1/2 bucket	1	2xcase
		Bulgar		1x20kg	5kg	1	1x20kg
	Canned	Tomato		2xcase	3	1	2xcase
		Chickpea		1xcase	3	1	1xcase
		Black Bean		1xcase	3	1	1xcase
		Coconut Milk		1xcase	5	1	1xcase
	Dry Pulses	Green Lentil		1x10kg	0	1	1x10kg
		French Lentil		2xcase	1/4 bucket	1	2xcase
		Red Lentil		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Chickpea		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Navy Bean		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Yellow Split Pea		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Red Kidney Bean		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Black Bean		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
	Pasta	Rigatoni		2xcase	0	1	2xcase
		Rice Noodle		1xcase	0	1	1xcase
		Chow Mein		1xcase	0	1	1xcase
	Leavening	Active Dry Yeast		6 pcs	2pcs	1	6 pcs
		Baking Powder		1 large can	1/4 can	1	1 large can
		Baking Soda		1 Jug	1/4 jug	1	1 Jug
	Baking Sugar	Vanilla Extract		1 Jug	1/4 jug	1	1 Jug
		Brown		1xcase	3 bags	1	1xcase
		Granulated White		6x20kg	1 bag	1	6x20kg
	Spreads	Liquid Honey		12x500ml	3 jars	1	12x500ml
		Mustard, Grainy		1x5kg	1/4 bag	1	1x5kg
		Mustard, Dijon		1x5kg	1/4 bag	1	1x5kg
		Mustard, Specialty		1x5kg	1/4 bag	1	1x5kg
		Peanut Butter		1x10kg	1/4 tub	1	1x10kg
	Salt	Kosher		1xcase	3 boxes	1	1xcase
	Spices	Coriander, Whole		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Coriander, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Fennel Seed		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cumin Seed		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cumin, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Peppercorns, Whole		1 Jug	1/4 jug	1	1 Jug
		Fenugreek		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Chili flakes		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Sesame Seed		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Celery Seed		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Mustard Seed, yellow		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Mustard Seed, Brown		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Mustard Seed, Black		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Rice Flakes		Optional	0	1	Optional
		Chili Powder		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Mustard Powder		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Oregano, Dry		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Cardamom, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cardamom, Green		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cardamom, Black		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Paprika, Sweet		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Paprika, Smoked		1 bag	0	1	1 bag
		Kaffir Lime Leaf		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Star Anise		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Turmeric, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		5-Spice		Never again	0	1	Never again
		Cinnamon, Bark		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cinnamon, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## GOOD FOOD RULES

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

*Over the years, we have developed some straightforward approaches to healthy food and healthy eating that are intended to have a positive impact on the physical and mental health of the people we work with, our environment, and other players in the food system. We understand that there are severe constraints on the choices that many people can make, but we try to empower them to push back against these constraints to create as big a space as possible to take control over their own food. Though we care a lot about food, we try not to be zealots and to remember that above all, food should build community and be a source of pleasure.*

### 1. GOOD FOOD IS GOOD

We prioritize good food in everything we do. We believe good food is a priority, not an incidental, and that everyone — regardless of income — deserves to have it. We believe good food can build health, culture, and morale, and that a good meal can be the first step in many journeys.

### 2. IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT

The food we distribute and serve reflects our respect for our community members. If it's wilted, dented, sub-standard or doesn't contribute to health, we'd rather throw it away than pass it on. We work to ensure that we have enough resources to provide wholesome food in all programs.

### 3. IT MATTERS WHERE IT CAME FROM

We recognize that our food choices have impacts that stretch beyond our individual wellbeing — that they also affect our environment, our economy, farmers, etc. We “put our money where our mouth is” by buying local and sustainable foods whenever we can, and by encouraging others to do so as well.

### 4. HEATHY FOOD IS SIMPLE

Good nutrition doesn't need to be painful or confusing. For most of us, it's as simple as eating a variety of foods in moderation, lots of fruits and vegetables, and fewer highly processed foods. We encourage a common-sense approach to healthy eating that involves making the best choices we can most of the time, but still leaves room for joy and pleasure.

### 5. FOOD IS POWER

Cooking and growing your own food feels good because it allows you to control your ingredients, save money, and provide for yourself and your family and friends. We strive to create hands-on, inspiring opportunities for people to cook and grow food, and to share in the pleasure and empowerment that comes from knowing how to nourish themselves and others.

### 6. FOOD SHOULD TASTE GOOD

What we like to eat is important. We strive to respect personal and cultural food preferences, and to find the sweet spot where delicious meets nutritious. We think it's great to try new foods, but we try to build on tastes instead of being preachy or pushy about food choices.

### 7. FOOD BRINGS US TOGETHER

We're always looking for opportunities to get together around food. Coming together in the kitchen, dining room and garden allows us to break down barriers by focusing on a shared human need and the unique experiences, tastes, and skills that we each bring to the table.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## SAMPLE BUDGET FOR SMALL KITCHEN ITEMS

SOURCE: THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, STRATFORD

Category	Quantity	Item	Cost
<b>Pots and Pans</b>			
	3	Large stock pots	\$ 300.00
	4	Frying pans	\$ 240.00
	3	Sauce pans	\$ 45.00
<b>Small Kitchen Appliances</b>			
		Hobart mixer	\$ 1,000.00
		Small mixer	\$ 400.00
		Large immersion blender	\$ 1,000.00
		Steamer	\$ 700.00
		Industrial toaster	\$ 1,000.00
		Microwave	\$ 600.00
<b>Pans &amp; Trays</b>			
	10	Hotel pans	\$ 200.00
	10	Bus pans	\$ 100.00
	20	Sheet pans	\$ 160.00
	1	Rolling tray	\$ 130.00
	8	Dishwasher trays	\$ 120.00
<b>Storage &amp; Garbage Containers</b>			
	20	Plastic storage containers	\$ 150.00
	4	Garbage cans	\$ 120.00
<b>Cooking Knives</b>			
	10	Chef knives	\$ 400.00
	5	Bread knives	\$ 100.00
	10	Paring knives	\$ 150.00
<b>Misc. Utensils</b>			
		Flippers, whisks, spoons, etc.	\$ 300.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 7,215.00</b>



DOWNLOAD


Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## SAMPLE POSTERS FOR A COMMUNITY MEAL

SOURCE: THE LOCAL AND THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES

**60+ Midweek  
Lunch Out**  
at *The Local Community Food Centre*

**Every Wednesday**  
Lunch is served at 11:30  
followed by a light program at 12:30.  
No cost or by donation.



**The Local**  
Community Food Centre

The Local Community Food Centre  
612 Erie St., Stratford  
[www.thelocalcfc.org](http://www.thelocalcfc.org)  
519-508-3663



**free FAMILY\*  
DINNER**



\*Family: any combo of children/youth and adults

at  
**the Table** Community Food Centre  
**4:30-6:30, Saturday, March 22**  
Kid-friendly food and fun!

**the Table**  
community food centre

*These posters promoting Community Meals set a positive tone, while being creative and concise.*



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## DESIGNING A VOLUNTEER POSITION

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

A well-defined volunteer position will benefit both the volunteers for a particular program area and the person coordinating it. This document describes the thinking that goes into designing a volunteer position; including shift length, task lists, assistance, supervision and working with other volunteers.

Volunteer positions at The Stop are designed so that they provide:

- two- to four-hour shifts;
- a clearly defined task list;
- a reasonable workload and appropriately sized team to complete the tasks;
- a supervisor to provide support and direction; and,
- other volunteers to share the work experience with.

### Length of time

Most of our jobs are designed to be four-hour shifts. Attendance is typically once a week. If a longer period of time must be covered by volunteers, break the volunteer position into two shorter shifts.

### Clear task list

Consider the following points when designing a task list:

- List all of the things that the volunteer is expected to do. If the list seems too long, introduce a second volunteer job with different tasks.
- Ask yourself, is this a worthwhile job to have? Is it enough for someone to commit to and return to on a weekly basis? Where does the job satisfaction lie?

### Reasonable workload and assistance

Consider how many people you will need to complete the tasks that you have. A volunteer is discouraged by not enough work and equally by too much work. Save projects for those days when there is not enough regular work in order to keep the volunteers busy. Ease the workload on busy days by calling in extra support or reducing your expectations for that day (without impinging on the program requirements).

### A supervisor

Even experienced volunteers need to have a staff person on call in case they have a question, or simply to acknowledge their hard work. This demonstrates that we care about what they are doing. A supervisor is appreciated more if they share in the tasks that need to be done (even if just a little). Don't just order volunteers around.

### Other volunteers

Some people like to work alone, but most of us gain satisfaction from the companionship of our colleagues. Much can be learnt about dealing with people who are different from ourselves and working as a team. Design volunteer positions so that the volunteer has other volunteers around (even if they are not doing the same job) so that they can enjoy these benefits. When possible, arrange for time for a shared sit-down for a snack, beverage or meal to provide for social opportunities for volunteers.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## PROGRAM STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

While Volunteer Coordinators help to orient and accept new volunteers, a great deal of responsibility is placed on program staff to supervise, support and guide volunteers. This document addresses the role of program staff in ensuring a positive volunteer experience.

### Staff training

It is the responsibility of the Program Coordinator to train all program staff to manage volunteers appropriately. This includes:

- ensuring that the respect policy applies to volunteers as well as all others in the organization's environment (respect by volunteers and to volunteers by staff and participants);
- giving clear instructions;
- giving on-the-job training;
- effectively delegating to ensure volunteers are kept busy but not overworked;
- troubleshooting volunteer workloads; and,
- dealing with conflict and other issues.

### Volunteer welcome and orientation

A welcome and orientation are very important for new volunteers. This includes an orientation to the space and people, to health and safety issues, and to the beginning of your working relationship.

- Orientation: Welcome them to your program and provide a tour and orientation to the space, the staff, and other volunteers on their shift.
- Health and Safety: Volunteers must learn the health and safety aspects of the job as soon as they arrive. Consider having a hand-out on health and safety in your program for them to read or have another volunteer go through it with them before they begin their first shift.
- Building a working relationship: Learn their name; take an interest in them; explain aspects of the program

as you work together; and tell them to come to you and other staff if they have any questions or feedback about the program.

### Task allocation

Match the job to the person. Consider how long they've been in the program, their capacity to learn new tasks (as you're able to assess it), their physical capacity to do the task, and the difficulty of the task. Until you know them better, check back with them regularly to see how they're doing. Consider starting them on easier tasks and building up to more difficult ones. Provide a buddy who can spend time introducing them to various tasks and share their knowledge of the program.

### On-the-job training

On-the-job training can be done by staff or by using a buddy system with another volunteer. Follow the steps below to train on the job.

Step	Action
1	Describe the job to the volunteer.
2	Show them the job by doing it yourself.
3	Watch them do the job and provide feedback.
4	Ask them if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have understood</li> <li>• are comfortable doing this task</li> <li>• have any questions</li> </ul>
5	Tell them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when to stop (when there are no more eggs, when you are tired)</li> <li>• who to ask if they need help</li> <li>• what to do next</li> </ul>



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

Although volunteers don't get paid for the work that they do, their contribution to the Community Food Centres is invaluable. Over the years, we've developed many ways to support, recognize, and celebrate the incredible work that our volunteers do. We offer support to our volunteers in many ways at The Stop, not least by providing a welcoming and supportive work environment. In addition to this we can provide:

### Letters for public transit allowance

People on Ontario Works can get a public transit allowance if they volunteer. We are often asked to either write letters confirming that volunteers have committed to the position for six months or to fill in a Volunteer Details form provided to the volunteer by Ontario Works. Some volunteers on the Ontario Disability Support Program also get the transit allowance although this is now being phased out.

We write an average of five letters/forms per month. The Social Service Case Worker may call to confirm the letter is genuine. At times volunteers are told they cannot continue receiving the allowance if they remain volunteering with us and they need to move to a different volunteer location. This disrupts our program because we have to find a new volunteer and it also threatens the bonds that the volunteer has established with our community through their volunteering. We do everything we can to move volunteers within our programs in order that they can continue to get the allowance and stay within our community as a volunteer.

A number of volunteers have remained volunteering with us but gone on to find another position in order to continue receiving their TTC allowance. There is increasing emphasis on The Stop to prove that the volunteer position will lead to work skills for the volunteer.

### References for immigration, jobs, community service hours

Volunteers have asked for and received reference letters for immigration, jobs, community service hours, and student volunteer hours. To obtain immigration or jobs references a volunteer should have completed the required 4 to 6 months volunteering with us.

### Training

A variety of training is provided to volunteers in our programs, depending on their specific assignment.

- **The Safe Food Handling certificate** training is given.
- **The George Brown "Creating Health" course** is provided four times per year to our kitchen and drop-in volunteers.
- **In-house one-off training** specific to programs, e.g. anti-oppression / challenging stereotypes, etc.
- **Our garden workshops** are available to all volunteers.
- **Bake oven training** is provided as needed.
- **The Education program** does training specific to that program.
- **All volunteers** get on-the-job training specific to their program and tasks.

### Access to services

Volunteers are invited and welcomed to use service at the Community Food Centre, in the same way that other community members access services. These services include:

- **Food Bank:** All volunteers are allowed to access the Food Bank once per month. Volunteers do not need to live in the catchment area.
- **Drop-In:** All volunteers can have breakfast or lunch after their shift.
- **Healthy Beginnings:** Volunteers have access to the daycare while they are volunteering.

### Tokens for public transit

Tokens are available for those who need them in order to be able to volunteer (i.e. if you live at a distance that requires you to take transit or if you are disabled).

### Good Food Market membership

All volunteers are welcome to become members of the Good Food Market. This entitles volunteers to a membership card. Each time a volunteer completes a shift they receive a stamp on their card. Four stamps on a card entitles the volunteer to \$10 of produce at the Good Food Market.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

**KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL:**  
**HOW TO START A COMMUNITY MEAL PROGRAM**

is produced by Community Food Centres Canada  
with the help of The Stop, The Table, The Local, NorWest Co-op,  
and Regent Park Community Food Centres

The manual was developed  
for use by staff at  
Community Food Centres and  
Good Food Organizations



[www.goodfoodorganizations.ca](http://www.goodfoodorganizations.ca)



**Community Food Centres Canada** provides resources and a proven approach to partner organizations across Canada to create Community Food Centres that bring people together to grow, cook, share, and advocate for good food. CFCC also works with the broader food movement to build greater capacity for impact and to empower communities to work toward a healthy and fair food system.



Kitchen Confidential: How to start a community meal program by Community Food Centres Canada (2015) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. All photos in this document are copyright the photographers and therefore the above Creative Commons licensing applies only to the text herein.

**Contact Us**

80 Ward St. Suite 100, Toronto ON M6H 4A6  
Tel: 416 531 8826 - [www.cfccanada.ca](http://www.cfccanada.ca) - [info@cfccanada.ca](mailto:info@cfccanada.ca)  
 @aplaceforfood Community Food Centres Canada

Charitable # 83391 4484 RR0001



# INTRODUCTION

Community Meal programs are central to the Community Food Centre model, and an effective way to meet a basic need of access to healthy food in a respectful and dignified manner. Also known as drop-in meals, community meals are a common entry point into the diverse programs at Community Food Centres. **Food access programs** such as the Community Meal are complimented by **food skills programs**, which develop healthy food behaviours and skills, primarily in the areas of gardening and cooking, and **education and engagement programs**, which work to give people and communities a voice and agency on food and hunger issues.

## The Space

The community meal is characteristically served in a space that functions as a combination dining room and

community gathering place. When animated by dedicated staff, this space is a safe, welcoming, and vibrant place where community members can eat together but can also, during non-meal hours, simply relax, chat, read the newspaper, play games, or participate in organized activities. In Community Food Centres, community dining rooms try to comfortably seat 80 people at minimum (ideally 100+). Spaces are decorated with chalkboards, program posters, photos, and other visuals.

The dining area can be animated by a variety of staff ranging from the Community Chef, who may be holding food demonstrations, or by other staff and participants hosting social justice clubs or movie nights. It's very helpful if staff animating the space have the ability to calmly and subtly resolve conflict as it arises. More than

## THE ROGELS' STORY

Delmy and Gilberto Rogel moved to Canada from El Salvador in 2006 with their daughter Ariana. In San Salvador, Delmy worked as a journalist at a community radio station, while Gilberto taught politics and sociology at Don Bosco University. The family moved to Toronto knowing no one in the city. "When we started our life here, we tried to be positive, to connect with society," explains Delmy. "We took Ariana to community swimming and ballet classes, to the beach, trying different things that would make us feel like a part of Toronto."

The Rogels found out about The Stop while seeking immigration advice at the nearby Community Action Resource Centre. A worker there suggested they come to the Drop-in for lunch. They walked in thinking it was a restaurant, and walked out with a much different perspective on the neighbourhood. Soon, both parents were attending sessions at Sabor Latino, a Spanish language community kitchen program. When Delmy became pregnant with the couple's second child, she joined The Stop's Healthy Beginnings program, and came back when she was carrying their third. "When you're pregnant, you really need support, and Healthy Beginnings gives you that," says Delmy. "I made friends there that I still keep in touch with."



*The Stop's Healthy Beginnings program offers pre- and post-natal nutrition and support.*

"My experience with The Stop has helped me discover my way," says Delmy. "Now, I want to give back." Delmy recently started the Community Worker Program at George Brown College. While balancing three young kids and a busy home life with school work that's not in her native language is challenging, Delmy's loving it. "I love keeping in touch with the community."

just a place to have a meal, the dining room can act as a gateway to community engagement. The space, both during and outside of meals, can be a place for effective outreach; program coordinators can inform participants about Peer Advocacy Office hours, say, or invite them to join other events.

At The Table in Perth, the community dining room is staffed by a volunteer animator who greets people as they come in the door. That person makes people feel welcome and at ease. The animator sometimes shares information about other programming — telling pregnant women about the Good Food for a Healthy Baby program, for example — while staff and volunteers join community members at the table to talk about other available programs.

At The Local in Stratford, Ontario, staff offer various forms of entertainment and education in the community dining room: after the 60+ Seniors Lunch (Appendix J), guests are invited to present recipes, lead the group in simple exercises, or play piano for a sing-a-long. Prior to their Wellness Breakfast, a yoga instructor comes in for a light stretching session.

At all CFCs, the Community Meal provides access to a hot and healthy breakfast, lunch, or dinner to people struggling with hunger and food insecurity. It is also a way of demonstrating what an affordable, healthy meal can look and taste like. The effect is immediate: diners who may have been unaware of — or even fearful of — a vegetable like kale can learn that when prepared well, it can be delicious.

## The Food

A tasty, nutritious meal served in a convivial setting boosts morale, increases physical and mental health, and connects people to each other and a variety of supports. The Community Meal:

- provides free nutritious and delicious meals on a regular basis;
- uses seasonal fruits, vegetables, and meats sourced from local, sustainable farmers wherever possible;
- provides vegetarian and culturally appropriate dietary options;
- serves meals to participants seated at their tables to maintain dignity;
- offers fun, interactive activities and other informal opportunities for socializing before and after meals;
- offers food demonstrations and nutrition information that encourage people to try new foods;
- enforces policies that ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all;
- maintains a colourful, well-lit, and clean space; and
- connects people to other programs and community resources and supports as needed.

Different communities have different needs and resources, and will choose to offer a different schedule of meals. The Stop once offered a mid-afternoon snack in addition to its breakfasts, a schedule that evolved, in response to demand, to four breakfasts and four lunches a week. The Local CFC in Stratford, offers a 60+ Seniors Lunch every Wednesday, in addition to their Monday Night Dinner and Wellness Breakfast. The Table, meanwhile, offers three community dinners every week.

The number of meals offered, and the number of diners attending each meal, will also depend on the number of meal programs available at other organizations in the community, as well as the time of year or month. Most CFCs see an increase in numbers towards the end of the month, as participants' budgets reach their limit.

## What We Hear: Evaluating Community Meal Programs

In 2014, The Stop, The Table, The Local, and Regent Park Community Food Centres served a total of 143,119 healthy meals.

As part of the annual program survey conducted across all CFCs, we ask participants what they like most about the Community Meal, and what difference the program had made in their lives. Here's what we heard in 2014:

*“It saved my mental health having the proper amount of nutrition each week.”*

— participant at **The Stop Community Food Centre**, Toronto

*“The meals are nutritious, they're colourful, good for you and fresh. Lots of variety and we have a community chef who knows what she's doing.”*

— participant at **The Table Community Food Centre**, Perth, ON

*“It's always a good meal. It's healthy. For some people here, it's the only good meal they'll have this week. I'm glad this place is here.”*

— participant at **The Local Community Food Centre**, Stratford, ON



## RELATED RESOURCES

### Good Food Principles

(Appendix A)

### 10 Tips on Running a Drop-in Meal Program

(Appendix B)

### Sample Posters for a Community Meal

(Appendix J)



# THE COMMUNITY CHEF: ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Community Chef is the linchpin of the Community Meal Program. He or she is responsible for purchasing and organizing food and supplies, running the kitchen, supervising and training volunteers, and ensuring a safe, efficient workplace.

There are several challenges that keep the Community Chef's job interesting. He or she usually works with a limited budget, and has to plan menus that may contain a significant amount of donated (and not always predictable) food. He or she tends to produce a meal with the help of volunteers with a range of cooking experience. In addition, the chef strives to produce a healthy meal for a large number of people with as little waste as possible, and to accommodate diners who may have little interest in unfamiliar ingredients and dishes.

It's incredibly beneficial to have a Community Chef that possesses the skills of a professional chef, and is simultaneously incredibly flexible, patient, and good humoured. While Community Meal kitchens require, like any commercial kitchen, a hierarchical structure with the chef at the top, they are no place for the outsized egos and temper tantrums common in restaurants; no one wants a Gordon Ramsay cooking a Community Meal.

Organization is also a must-have skill in a Community Chef, as tracking past meals and planning for future ones is part and parcel of the job. See the sample Community Chef Job Description (Appendix C) for a starting place in your search for a chef. The Meal Log Template (Appendix D) is a good tool for chefs to track ingredients and costs of his/her meals while also capturing diner feedback, skills volunteers may have learned, and powerful stories that can be retold publicly. The Sample Weekly Menu (Appendix E) is another good tool that can assist in weekly meal planning across programs, managing related prep, and ordering food.

## Donations vs. Purchasing

The meals in Community Meal programs are created using a varying proportion of donated and purchased food. The amount of each depends on budgets, storage supplies, and relationships with suppliers. In the early days, the meals at The Stop consisted of approximately 50 per cent donated food; currently, that amount is less than 5 per cent. That shift occurred for two reasons: one, most donated food now goes directly to the Food Bank, reflecting a shift in the philosophy around their

## THE MAKING OF A COMMUNITY CHEF

When Judy Dempsey, Community Chef at The Table, opened her extremely popular restaurant, the Hungry Planet, in 1997, it was unlike anything Perth had ever seen. The menu changed every couple days and she focused as much as possible on local and seasonal produce. This was long before such terms became the buzzwords they are today, and Dempsey's commitment to those culinary ideals was anything but commonplace.

A self-taught cook, Dempsey started a catering company for film studios in the early 80s. She moved to Perth to raise her kids and helped start the town's first farmers' market (where she also sold what she calls "weird breads and interesting sauces"). Intending to start catering again, she found a space that could also house a restaurant and the Hungry Planet was born. Dempsey ran the restaurant for 12 years; that success required an incredible amount of work. After more than a decade of 80-hour work weeks, she closed the Hungry Planet and took a couple other food-related jobs before helping, in 2013, to transform the local food bank into what is now The Table Community Food Centre. "It's really deeply gratifying to make delicious food for people who really appreciate it," Dempsey says. "It was my most unbelievable, charming dream come true, to be able to do this."



Food Bank hampers (once they were identical and now, hampers are as flexible as possible to accommodate participants' various diets and needs); and two, the purchasing budget was significantly increased.

Very few organizations will have comparable purchasing power, especially in the early years of offering the program, and as a result will need to rely somewhat on donations. At The Local, former Community Chef Jordan Lassaline created his meals with about 60 to 75 per cent donated product — the consequence of their also operating a separate warehouse/distribution centre called the Storehouse, staffed by someone whose job is, in part, about securing large donations from local agricultural producers. (The Storehouse is also used by other area food banks, student nutrition programs and shelters.) There, the warehouse drives menus to a certain extent — produce arrives in large quantities (a couple thousand pounds of peppers, for example) and the Community Chef's job is to use it before it spoils.

To secure produce donations, chefs establish relationships with local farmers, many of whom will donate produce that, while still completely edible, may not meet the criteria for sale (too big or too small, too blemished, etc.), and may otherwise go to waste. Farmers who produce seasonal food in great abundance may not be willing to donate, but may be able to sell that produce at a reasonable price because of their production scale. (It's always preferable to be able to pay a farmer

for food, even at a reduced price — farmers may be willing to donate to charitable organizations but many of them are also struggling and finding a way to pay them is better.) Some farmers are still interested in donating produce, however, and such an offer can work out well. Often, these transactions emerge organically out of pre-existing relationships — The Stop's Community Chef Scott MacNeil once worked at Rowe Farms, a sustainable food retailer, and for a time was able to regularly secure frozen stir-fry meat that the company couldn't sell. Organizations in Ontario should note that the 2013 Local Food Act introduced a new non-refundable income tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural products to eligible community food programs, including food banks. The credit is worth 25 per cent of the fair market value of the agricultural products donated.

It's important to recognize the limitations of donations and establish a policy around their acceptance — just because food is free, doesn't mean it's good. People living on low incomes should not have to accept just any handout; if food is stale, wilted or gross in any way, it should not be accepted. (We encourage organizations to develop their own policies around food donations. Here's a motto that can be helpful: If in doubt, throw it out.) As a general rule at Community Food Centres, staff accepting donations work to ensure food is healthy, edible, and hasn't expired (not as obvious as you think — rotting pears and Burger King hamburger patties have accidentally been accepted in the past).

The size or source of a donation is sometimes a factor, too. Occasionally, well-intentioned but inflexible donors can only donate large quantities of a product, larger than an organization can accommodate. The Community Chef will try their best to incorporate the product into meal planning (or find other programs where it can be put to use). Where donations are a significant source of product, those donations will predictably, and significantly, determine what's on the menu.

Direct purchasing comes with its own set of complexities. Most CFCs use conventional restaurant suppliers for dry goods, produce, and paper products. Establishing a good relationship with a butcher is important, and since Community Meal programs often serve more people per day than a lot of restaurants, most suppliers should be able to offer generous discounts. Centralized ordering is usually ideal — to prevent overlap and waste, the Community Chef can order all products for both the Community Meal program and other programs that offer food, such as community kitchens. At The Stop, MacNeil creates a template/calendar with all meals for the week and what's needed for each meal and all the other programming that's scheduled for that week (see Appendix E). He sends a reminder email every Monday to the coordinators of all



*A volunteer harvests green onions in The Table's kitchen garden.*



Community Kitchen programs, asking what they need a week in advance. To fill gaps in supplies, and usually only for things that are occasionally needed, grocery store trips are necessary — at The Stop, this is only about 10 to 15 per cent of purchasing, and can usually be completed in a single trip. To avoid waste, MacNeil purchases whatever leftover food is available from The Stop's weekly Good Food Market. Some of that purchased food goes to the Food Bank and some to the Community Meal program. The day after the market, MacNeil organizes all the leftovers (usually only about \$200 in product) and divides it among different programs.

*Just because food is free,  
doesn't mean it's good.*

Wherever possible, we recommend supporting local farmers, as such purchases bolster the local economy and food system. The higher cost that local, sustainable food can entail will undoubtedly be a factor, but with careful budgeting and prioritizing, it's possible to regularly include locally produced ingredients — be they fresh produce, meat, dairy, eggs, or other products — in your menu. The short growing season around Perth, ON means that there's a fairly limited window for most fresh vegetables. Chef Judy Dempsey of The Table takes full advantage of local farmers' markets and her long-standing relationship with nearby farmers to source what she can while it's in supply. Of course, her meal program also benefits greatly from The Table's bountiful community garden, adding plenty of ultra-local greens, tomatoes, and cucumbers into the mix. The Local Food Procurement Guide (Appendix F) goes into more detail about sourcing and funding local food.

The quantity of both donated and purchased supplies depends on available storage. At The Table, which has extremely limited capacity, Chef Dempsey does almost all of her purchasing at local grocery stores, usually on a daily basis. (Space is so limited, in fact, that she keeps a set of shelves in her office, usually reserved for more exotic items she picks up when in Ottawa and Toronto.) The little freezer storage space Dempsey has is reserved mainly for protein. She purchases meat directly from local farmers — whole cows, pigs, and chickens — and preps them for use in meals and at fundraising events. Coordinating the preparation and consumption of that meat can take considerable planning. Dempsey tells the story of meeting with a farmer in February to purchase chickens. The chickens were killed in July and delivered to The Table's kitchen, where Dempsey spent an entire day cutting them up (she bought 40). Because the chickens were local and free-range and had used

their muscles, the meat was tougher and redder than the store-bought chicken diners were used to. To serve chicken legs people would actually eat, Dempsey spent another day slow-roasting the meat so that it could be more easily pulled from the bone and there was no colouration. She's had the same experience with beef — diners refuse to eat it because it's too pink — and typically has to hide it in Shepherd's Pie or chili. (More on this later.)

### Your Pantry Shelf

Maintaining a basic pantry shelf is straightforward. We recommend identifying the things you use most often and ensure they're in stock. For example, if you determine that you always want a minimum of 10 kgs. of all-purpose flour on hand, order three 20-kg bags at a time and, when that supply gets down to one bag, order three more. Create a spreadsheet of your most important staple items and their order quantities, print it out as a checklist, and on your order day, check your supplies and order accordingly (see Inventory List — Appendix G for an example). Of course, this assumes you have a significant amount of storage space. It also doesn't account for donated items, which may also be added to a pantry, or things that are required by Community Kitchen programs. If you're making a Persian meal, say, it makes more sense to buy those specific ingredients only when needed.



## RELATED RESOURCES

### Community Chef Job Description

(Appendix C)

### Meal Log Template

(Appendix D)

### Sample Weekly Menu

(Appendix E)

### Local Food Procurement Guide

(Appendix F)

### Inventory List

(Appendix G)

### Good Food Rules

(Appendix H)

# THE BEST-LAID PLANS: HOW TO ORGANIZE AND GET PEOPLE TO EAT NUTRITIOUS MEALS

Most institutional kitchens — those at nursing homes, hospitals, etc. — use a rotating menu, often on a three-month cycle. It's efficient, allows the kitchen to keep a minimum amount of product on hand, and provides clear guidance week in, week out. While kitchens at CFCs and GFOs can and should aspire to such efficiency, there are other important things to take into account. For one thing, menu cycles could take into consideration seasonality: a pasta dish can be planned months in advance but the key ingredients can be amended — the same recipe could include sweet potato in the winter and then asparagus in the spring. Other considerations for menu-planning, as mentioned earlier, are what donated or nearly stale-dated products need to be used up, if any, and also, not insignificantly, what menus will interest and challenge the Community Chef, the volunteers, and the diners. While some people like routine, others don't. Menus may need to be altered in response to diners' changing tastes (as the participant demographic shifts, for example, certain foods may fall out of favour).

For many Community Meal programs, planning only a week or two in advance is necessary but also usually sufficient. At The Local, former Community Chef Jordan Lassaline would start planning for the following week on Wednesday or Thursday, creating his menus based on what had been donated to their Storehouse. He found it helpful to put his Monday dinners on a rotation — that is, he asked his Monday volunteers what dishes they needed to have on rotation and they built a list that repeats four times a year. That allowed him to better connect with local farmers; he could tell them what dates in the coming months he needed chicken or pork and they would incorporate The Local's needs into their production. While that helped him plan main dishes, he always remained flexible on sides, salads, and desserts so he could make use of items that might crop up more unpredictably. Being too rigid in your planning is sometimes unhelpful.

At The Table, Community Chef Judy Dempsey actively resists too much planning. The short growing season in Perth means she takes full advantage of what's in season from week to week by incorporating the latest offerings into her menu plan as add-ons at the last minute.

Green beans and asparagus, for example, have a short run so as soon as they're in season, she makes room for them on the plate. Moreover, she sees her menus as a creative expression that evolves in response to both the feedback she gets from diners and her latest culinary inspiration. Her penchant for culturally diverse foods weaves its way into her menus; and while dishes like fish tacos and biryani may not have gone over too well initially, she's been able to find a happy medium with diners through subtle tweaks here and there.

## **You Do Make Friends with Salad!**

Offering vegetarian options regularly within the menu plan is a good idea not only because vegetarian options are generally healthier but also because vegetarian dishes can offer greater flexibility. That is, participants who require halal or kosher meals can still enjoy a vegetarian meal when halal and kosher options are not



*At The Stop, as with other CFCs, volunteers plate and deliver meals to diners, providing a more dignified experience.*

available. With some planning, the same dish can be adapted for both meat-eaters and vegetarians.

At The Stop, MacNeil makes one completely vegetarian meal for every three meat meals. At The Local, each meal includes three to four vegetables on every plate. CFCs find that even in multiethnic communities, the most popular dishes tend to be Western comfort food (meatloaf, lasagna, turkey dinner, pizza, etc.).



That said, it's important to acknowledge and accommodate the cultural diversity of the community where possible. This question of taking diversity into account — accommodating existing tastes while pushing the envelope a little — is a delicate one. See our Good Food Rules (Appendix H) for more on this!

In a restaurant, when you produce a taco, the appearance and size of the dish affects the customer's perception of value. There should be, in the eyes of the customer, an equitable exchange of their money for your product. Without that monetary exchange, value is perceived differently. The value of the product for the community members in The Stop's Community Meal is based on whether they're receiving the same amount as their fellow diners and also, crucially, whether the meal accurately accommodates their tastes and desires.

However, it is also true that sometimes you can win people over to new foods through sheer deliciousness. CFC chefs have had the experience of having their food rejected by people who find it too strange or unfamiliar, and of having someone give a rave review to some dish they always thought they'd hate, but actually liked when they had a chance to taste it.

Casually monitoring demographic shifts and changing your menu accordingly is important. It can be tricky to strike a balance. When he first started at The Stop, MacNeil had to make twice as much of the vegetarian alternative whenever he served a pork dish in order to satisfy halal and Caribbean diners. But as the Drop-in's Latino population increased, pork became more popular and the need for more vegetarian alternatives diminished (whether non-pork-eaters just stopped coming to the

## HEALTHY EATING PLATE

**HEALTHY OILS**

Use healthy oils (like olive and canola oil) for cooking, on salad, and at the table. Limit butter. Avoid trans fat.

The more veggies – and the greater the variety – the better. Potatoes and French fries don't count.

Eat plenty of fruits of all colors.

**STAY ACTIVE!**

© Harvard University

Harvard School of Public Health  
The Nutrition Source  
[www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource)

**WATER**

Drink water, tea, or coffee (with little or no sugar). Limit milk/dairy (1-2 servings/day) and juice (1 small glass/day). Avoid sugary drinks.

VEGETABLES

WHOLE GRAINS

FRUITS

HEALTHY PROTEIN

Eat a variety of whole grains (like whole-wheat bread, whole-grain pasta, and brown rice). Limit refined grains (like white rice and white bread).

Choose fish, poultry, beans, and nuts; limit red meat and cheese; avoid bacon, cold cuts, and other processed meats.

Harvard Medical School  
Harvard Health Publications  
[www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu)

*A simple, easy-to-use tool for menu planning and use in programs.*

Drop-in is difficult to determine).

Striking the right balance between health and diner satisfaction is tricky. To get there, Community Food Centres tend to base their meals on the general concept of the healthy plate — see the Harvard Healthy Eating Plate on the opposite page. Finding a way to include a very healthy portion of fruit and vegetables is important, as this is what so many people — people living on low-incomes in particular — lack in their diet. At The Stop, this has meant that each lunch includes some form of salad, with varying ingredients, but with as many nutritious green leafy vegetables (spinach, darker leaf lettuces, etc.) as possible. Salads are topped with homemade dressing, as well as other tasty and nutritious additions like cheese or nuts. Chefs strive to make their meals filling and not too fatty (but fatty enough to be satisfying and to give people pleasure and energy for an extended period of time). And while pleasing everyone is impossible, the Community Chef aspires to please as many members of the community as he or she can — over time, they find that sweet spot. In terms of appearance and taste, remember that you are not trying to create a restaurant-quality, cosmetically perfect meal but rather a home-cooked meal that you would be proud to serve at your own dinner table. Often staff at CFCs who eat their lunch there say that this meal tends to be the best one of their day. This is a great testimonial to the quality of the food.

*“It gets me a variety of things to eat. Things that I would never try that I haven’t had before. Like I never knew that mint would go well with rice until I had it here.”*

— Participant at **The Table Community Food Centre**, Perth, ON

### **Secret Kale (and Squash, and Cauliflower...)**

While the most popular dishes in every Community Meal program tend to be traditional comfort food, the Community Chef can still endeavour to maximize the nutritional content of every meal. You are aiming to challenge people’s palates a little bit at the same time as you promote healthy food. Like it says in our Good Food Rules (Appendix H), chefs strive “to find the terrain where nutritious meet delicious” always tinkering with the menu in order to get to this sweet spot.



*Chef Judy Dempsey’s menus strive to balance familiar foods with the more adventurous.*



## MY BEST MEAL

“It’s more subtle when things go right than when they go wrong. If there’s a blunder in the kitchen or a meal misses the mark, it’s pretty hard to miss. But it’s really important to take note of when things do fall into place.

Often, the best meals happen when volunteers work like clockwork — when they have the right mix of experience and interest, take in new volunteers well, and function with just a little guidance and little stress.

When a meal goes right, I usually can’t tell until the end. Sometimes, when I’m not expecting it, as participants are socializing after a meal and starting to filter out of the building, people will come up to me and compliment the meal. Sometimes quite a few will do so and that’s when I know we hit the mark. I always try to pass those comments on to the volunteers and make a note of what was served. I’ll tuck that recipe away and next time it comes up we’ll try to improve it. There have been a few moments when a participant’s comment has really hit home with me. One gentleman came up to me after a meal that included a squash salad with pumpkin seeds and raisins and told me that when he first started coming to the meals, he thought my salads were all really weird. But after trying them he really enjoys them and looks forward to trying new ones. A mother of two



*Jordan Lassaline, formerly the Community Chef at The Local Community Food Centre*

young children told me how her daughter, age 7, said that she wanted to dress up as a chef for Halloween that year and when she asked her why she told her, “Like that guy at The Local that feeds everybody.” It was a very touching moment and I’ve since become good friends with the mother through my cooking classes and gotten to know her children a bit.”

— *Jordan Lassaline, former Community Chef at The Local Community Food Centre*

For participants who have been unable to regularly access nutritious whole foods, or who might be used to sweet and salty processed foods, these meals can be unfamiliar, strange, or even repellent. At times, getting them to try new foods can require a little subterfuge. In summer 2013, The Stop and The Table saw a bumper crop of kale that forced them to integrate the nutritious leafy green in as many dishes as possible. Given diners’ relative unfamiliarity with, and, in some cases, outright hatred for the vegetable, the chefs puréed it and hid it in pasta and pizza sauce, or chopped it finely and mixed it with herbs or spinach. Eventually, as diners came to appreciate — or at least tolerate — it, kale was served raw in salad, softened and flavoured by vinaigrette. The same technique can be applied to other unpopular veggies like squash and cauliflower (camouflage it in mac ‘n’ cheese!). The point is not to force people to eat foods that they don’t like, but rather to introduce them to foods they may not have tried and to show them that

it can be delicious.

Getting participants to try different foods is sometimes simply a matter of gentle misdirection. Every CFC dining room has a menu board of some kind, whether a whiteboard or blackboard, and here it’s possible to describe a meal in a way that’s enticing and accessible — and without scaring diners off. For example, why call lasagna or chili without meat “vegetarian” when people may not even notice the lack of meat if it is delicious enough? Why not simply re-name something that sounds uncomfortably unfamiliar? Or describe the vegetable portion of a meal as “roasted veggies and greens” rather than calling attention to items like squash and beets that people might associate with childhood disgust. Occasionally omitting specific ingredients is the safest policy — there might be squash in the corn muffins, but diners don’t necessarily need to know that. It can be a place to reassure participants that the chili being served is “not spicy” or to encourage them to ask



Decorated by local volunteer artists, The Stop's Food of the Month chalkboard features seasonal produce that is put on higher rotation in meals, hampers, community kitchens, and food demonstrations.

questions about a meal.

There are other ways to share nutritional information, often in tandem with other programs. The Local offers cooking classes, while at The Stop, a targeted donation enables funds to be set aside for a Food of the Month. This particular food — let's say broccoli — is available in Food Bank hampers, and used in meals, community kitchens, and food demonstrations. Broccoli recipes are made available to participants at the Food Bank (both on printed flyers and on the website) and, through the meals, diners learn new ways the food can be prepared and enjoyed in their own kitchens. Information about each Food of the Month is shared more informally, too, with servers and animators in the dining room always available to answer questions.

Of course, communication needs to be two-way. You should also give participants a forum through which they can provide feedback to the kitchen. Conversation with servers, animators, and chefs can allow for this,

of course, but a formal comment box is a tried-and-true method. At The Local, many comments are posted publicly, with the kitchen providing helpful, contextual answers to questions like, “Why did you put carrots in the banana bread?” (Answer: to increase the fiber content of the dessert.) Since The Local started doing this about a year ago, negative comments have almost completely disappeared, and the amount of uneaten food going back to the kitchen has dropped.



## RELATED RESOURCES

**Good Food Rules** (Appendix H)



# SLOW-RISING DOUGH: HOW TO MAKE CHEAP MEALS

The number of people served at each Community Meal program varies from organization to organization and from meal to meal, depending on the time of month, weather, and other free meals available in the community. Even with those fluctuating factors, the ideal per-meal cost is, at most, \$2 a plate. Hitting that price point isn't always easy, but it can be made less difficult if there are lots of useable leftovers from a previous meal, food diverted from another program (produce market, etc.), or significant donations. A meal that costs nothing will compensate for a more elaborate expensive one. Purchasing cheaper meats, using more dry beans or more common ingredients can also help cut costs. As with any budget, it's advisable to accurately track spending. Log everything purchased and, if you find yourself going over budget, adjust future meals accordingly. This tracking can take considerable time at first but is vital.

*The ideal per-meal cost is,  
at most, \$2 a plate.*

Getting the biggest bang for your buck in the kitchen is second nature for most chefs (and, of course, many non-professional cooks) — and largely common sense. If budget permits only a small serving of meat, it can be supplemented with quinoa, legumes, and iron-rich vegetables like chard. CFC chefs strive to ensure portions are sufficient but not large, and they try not to only offer second helpings once everyone has been served. At The Table, Dempsey likes to offer children second portions of salad — they're growing, after all! Water, milk, coffee and tea are ideal beverages to serve at meals, while juice makes a rarer appearance as it is expensive and high in sugar. (At The Local, they decided not to skimp on the coffee served and managed to secure a local supplier of fair-trade coffee to avoid perpetuating elsewhere the economic problems they're trying to combat in Stratford.) Here are a few other nuggets of good advice from CFC chefs:

- instead of making two hundred steaks, you can use that same meat in many more burgers and stews;
- don't order too much and seek out value;
- stock up on in-season and on-sale produce and preserve it;
- buy a lot of something if it's on sale; and
- be creative with your leftovers.

## MAKING THE SWITCH FROM HAUTE CUISINE

Like most Community Chefs, Grant Mitchell came to the NorWest Co-op CFC in Winnipeg as a veteran of the restaurant industry. While his skill set prepared him for the more technical side of running NorWest's kitchen, there was plenty that set the community space apart from his former workplace. In addition to swapping out a world of inflated egos and fine dining delicacies for the dynamic, community-engagement approach of the Community Food Centre, his food budget shrank considerably from what he was used to. But creating healthy, delicious meals for his target \$1.50 a plate has been a challenge he revels in.

To make the most of his budget, Mitchell will ask suppliers if they have any "last cases" of produce that, because of limited volume or mild blemishes, won't otherwise get sold. He acquired an \$8 case of fresh fennel and a \$6 case of rainbow carrots this way. He'll also make sure to even out the meal costs through the course of the week. For example, a more expensive lunch featuring premium ingredients like red peppers or chicken might be balanced by a cheap and cheerful meal of soup, salad, and homemade bread.

All in all, Mitchell finds the CFC's lack of opulence freeing. "There's less pressure to make something extravagant, and there's a new kind of creative freedom that comes with working so closely with the community."



## RELATED RESOURCES

**Good Food Rules** (Appendix H)

**Sample Budget for Small Kitchen Items**  
(Appendix I)

# PRESSURE COOKER: HOW TO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the bedrock of most nonprofit organizations. This is no more so than in the Community Meal program — it would be impossible to make meals so cheaply without the gift of labour volunteers provide. So it's important to provide a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable work environment for them.

The number of volunteers required in each Community Meal program depends on the size of the kitchen and the number of meals being made — anywhere between four and twelve. It's invaluable to have at least one or two volunteers per shift with some cooking experience who can support other volunteers and share their knowledge. More important than cooking experience, however, are a sense of humour, curiosity, and openness. In some cases, a kitchen volunteer crew can be comprised of people with a wide swath of skill sets: a couple of participants with developing kitchen skills, a former line cook, a retired teacher and current donor who's great with a pork chop but less great with chard, a university student who's passionate about food issues but not agile with a knife. You can start to see how even the most dedicated volunteer team can be a handful to manage. Regardless of your volunteers' experience, skill set, or socio-economic background, you want them to feel comfortable, that their skills are being put to use, and that they're having a good time.

To a great extent, volunteers will determine what jobs are most appropriate for them, depending on their own interest. At The Local, the chef canvasses volunteers when they first arrive, telling them what

meal they're making, outlining the most pressing jobs (chopping onions, getting the banana bread in the oven, etc.) and then allowing them to choose which jobs they want to do. Once the most pressing jobs are out of the way, there's a longer list of smaller tasks they can take on as they become available. Some volunteers are entirely content to spend their shift washing dishes or peeling potatoes, while others are more ambitious. All volunteers who'll be using a knife are taught proper knife skills. The Community Chef may not always have the time to adequately do this, so other knowledgeable volunteers can be encouraged to provide this training. If there's time, it's often very helpful to pair up a new volunteer (one who's not needed on that shift) with a more experienced one and let the new person shadow them. That way they can learn without any real pressure.

*Regardless of your volunteers' experience, skill set, or socio-economic background, you want them to feel comfortable, that their skills are being put to use, and that they're having a good time.*



*Many of The Stop's volunteers first got involved as program participants.*



Much of this training is trial-by-fire and casual — sometimes, a chef will correct a volunteer because they need a component of the meal to be precise, and other times, if a mistake won't harm a diner's experience, they'll allow the volunteer to learn from their mistakes. At the very least, volunteers should be trained in basic hand-washing, what kind of clothes to wear, and how to keep their hair tucked away. All volunteers need to be taught basic kitchen safety commands — “behind,” “hot,” “sharp,” etc. — to avoid accidents. More dangerous jobs are usually the chef's domain, or that of the most experienced volunteers (at The Table, for example, Dempsey is the only one who gets to use the meat-slicer).

Another good thing to remember is to bring your volunteers in early enough to give them enough time to prepare the meal but not so early that they become bored or burn out. While every chef operates his/her kitchen in a unique way, you want to aim for it to be a challenging, dynamic, and inspiring place. Volunteers will take pride in the fact that they've created a beautiful, tasty meal for hundreds of people in just a few hours. While a more institutional approach, where the bulk of a meal is made by the chef in advance, might be more efficient, such efficiency forfeits a lot of the spontaneity and creativity that captures the imagination of volunteers. Also, there will be days when volunteers are ill, or just fail to show up, and you'll have to quickly simplify your meal. If using a restaurant model, you might work three days in advance, but with the volunteer-engagement model, you don't want to prep too much beforehand. Things that might take too long to make just before the meal —

*Volunteers will take pride  
in the fact that they've  
created a beautiful, tasty meal  
for hundreds of people in just  
a few hours.*

the bolognese and béchamel sauce for lasagna, perhaps — can be made ahead of time by the chef. Onions and potatoes can be peeled and chopped by volunteers. Try to balance the amount of prep for future meals against the amount of clean-up time from just completed meals: at The Table, Dempsey usually devotes about an hour to prep on her own, plus three hours prepping the meal, dining room, and signage with volunteers. Volunteers then spend about 30 minutes after each meal on clean up.

Inevitably, the process of creating a Community Meal, week in, week out, gives way to great camaraderie between volunteers. Just like on any sports team, you don't want to let your teammates down. To further foster this team spirit, you can encourage volunteers to sit down and eat the meal together after it's been served. You can also host volunteer appreciation events, or thank volunteers in other ways, for example by cooking up a special dish.

While volunteers can be given jobs that reflect their interest, not every kitchen is going to have someone who loves doing dishes or taking out the garbage. In an ideal world, there would be a budget to hire a dishwasher. Though this is often not the case, the relative value of a hired dishwasher should not be underestimated. If the chef is the engine of a kitchen, the dishwasher is the drivetrain — when not doing dishes, they're cleaning and organizing

## Top 5 Cooking Skills

What anyone working in a kitchen should know.

1. Knife skills: How to hold the knife, types of knives, basic cutting techniques, knife safety.
2. How to make a basic vinaigrette.
3. How to make a mirepoix and other flavour bases for soups.
4. How to cook meat (braising, slow roasting, etc.).
5. How to cut up a chicken.

## What to Do When Your Volunteers Don't Show Up

First of all, don't freak out. Second, hope you saved your leftovers! Given the fluctuating attendance at many Community Meals, you should have a good selection of leftovers. These can be used to make a meal if you don't have any or enough volunteers, if a delivery is late, or if you want to simply take a day off. Another easy way out is soup: you can throw almost any kind of vegetable in a pot with some sweated onion and garlic, a couple of potatoes and it will purée to smooth, creamy, and nutritious soup.

Alternatively, when you have a bit of extra time and/or an extra volunteer, you can double up on a bread or dessert recipe that you can then freeze and serve later when you're in a pinch. You can wash and freeze berries, roast some squash, or if you have a kitchen garden, you can always pick some herbs to make a pesto for freezing. As always, the kitchen can be a bit chaotic — volunteers can be unreliable, and donations can be dropped on you at the last minute — so it's always best to assume, and try to plan for, unwanted surprises.



*Many volunteers keep coming back, making friends, learning new skills, and offering valuable support to newer teammates in the kitchen.*

the rest of the kitchen. If there isn't budget, or someone who happens to thrive on these tasks, all volunteers can equally share more menial tasks (recognizing that the work is a group effort, they rarely complain).

Try to keep your eyes open for volunteers with exceptional ability and ambitions. These volunteers, especially if they've been active at your organization for some time, can be given more responsibility — producing a lunch, for example — or operational instruction (how to order supplies, plan meals, etc.). That way, they might be available to cover for a chef who's sick or going on vacation. In many cases, chefs who typically have strong ties to the

restaurant community will enlist friendly professional chefs to cover their shifts when on holiday, but a good, committed, longstanding volunteer may be able to fill this role as well.



## RELATED RESOURCES

**Designing a Volunteer Position** (Appendix K)

**Program Staff Responsibilities for Volunteers** (Appendix L)

**Supporting Volunteers** (Appendix M)



# STARTING FROM SCRATCH: SETTING UP AND MAINTAINING A KITCHEN

Whether your kitchen is purpose-built from scratch or shoehorned into existing structures, a few best practices govern kitchen design:

- Bigger is not necessarily better. A small, well-designed kitchen is more efficient and easier to work in than a large one with appliances that are incorrectly or illogically arranged. (Though if you're also running a community kitchen, keep in mind that you'll probably need to accommodate groups of 15 or so.)
- Try not to locate a kitchen so that people have to pass through it to get to other areas of the building.
- While it's not typical of a commercial kitchen design, a large central kitchen island can be useful for creating meals with volunteers and helpful in community kitchen programs, as it allows the chef to easily observe volunteers.
- The stove should be the focus of the room and all other appliances efficiently placed in relation to it in order to minimize the amount of travel to and from other appliances/storage/etc.
- The dish pit needs to be very accessible, and located close to the stove, though you shouldn't have to pass by the stove to access it.
- The dish pit should have three separate sinks so that dishes can be washed in one sink, and pots and pans in another.
- Given the choice, buy high-quality used equipment rather than lower-quality new equipment.
- Don't purchase too much equipment right away. Buy things slowly, as you learn what your programs need — and research what other equipment may be donated.
- If possible, don't purchase gas stoves with open burners. Not only do they generate more heat, oven mitts are more readily burned and pans and pots will get hot even if the stove's not on.
- Maximize work surface area.
- Open, stainless-steel shelving keeps ingredients visible and accessible, and are less likely to harbour insects and other pests.
- Under-counter refrigeration is very useful so that foods can be stored close to the stove.

Again, every kitchen is different and every chef has his/her preferences, but there are some key pieces of equipment that you'll ideally have in your kitchen:

1. Commercial stove and two-door oven, with six-foot grill
2. Dishwasher
3. Tilt kettle
4. Industrial steamer/steam tray
5. Mixer
6. Good-sized coffee maker (for volume and speed, an air pot or gravity pot are preferred)

## Maintenance

Good, regular kitchen maintenance is absolutely crucial, but given the time pressures already on Community Chefs, it's not always something they can perform. Many appliance manufacturers will provide some kind of maintenance and/or cleaning service and, depending on budget and time, chefs will strike a balance between outside and in-house labour. Every staff member who is using the community kitchen should be instructed on the proper use and maintenance of all equipment. (Volunteers should not be cleaning or maintaining any equipment.) Training small groups (usually no more than two people at a time) is recommended, and those



*In an open kitchen layout like the one at The Local CFC, prep stations double as serving areas.*

staffers can be given regular maintenance duties to ensure they've absorbed the information. A detailed, illustrated kitchen manual can be provided to all staff who undergo this training. Chefs can expect to have to perform occasional equipment repairs themselves (particularly plumbing). Routine maintenance will vary depending on the equipment you have, as well as maintenance schedules with manufacturers, number of meals being prepared, etc., but here are some good equipment maintenance rules of thumb:

- **Stove and oven**

Take the stove apart and clean it, ideally once a week. Oven should be cleaned on a similar schedule.

- **Range hood**

Remove and clean range hood louvers every two weeks (or at least no less than monthly) and clean and scrub hood monthly. Cleaning the louvers should only take about 15-20 minutes of active time and is just a matter of soaking and then running through the dishwasher. (It'll take a lot longer if you don't keep to this schedule.) If time is an issue, there are companies available to clean the louvers.

- **Dishwasher**

De-scale the machine no less than once every three months (some do it every month, even every week). Once a month, take the spray arms apart and make sure they're not clogged. The company that provides dishwashing chemicals may also provide routine maintenance.

- **Grease trap**

Most municipalities require grease traps to be cleaned on a regular basis. (In Toronto, for instance, it's bi-weekly.) External companies provide this service.

- **Pest control**

Depending on need, this should be performed weekly or bi-weekly.

- **Miscellaneous**

Rotational maintenance should be performed on all fridges (monthly) and oven/stoves (annually). If available and necessary, a staff member should mop floors at the end of the night, take out garbage and recycling, and make sure garbage cans and recycling bins are kept clean and free of pests. Linen services are available to clean aprons and rags.

## Working with Public Health

While every municipality's public health unit operates somewhat differently, they are generally consistent around issues of food safety and first-aid. The health unit is your ally and there to help; look to them if you have questions and to lead you. When setting up a kitchen, you'll have to submit your design plan to the health unit for approval and they will guide you in the placement of proper hand-washing facilities, separate food preparation sinks, appropriate dishwashing sinks, etc. Temperatures will be checked on all fridges and dishwashers. (In its first year of operation, The Table logged its own fridge temperatures daily.) The rating of your facility will determine the number of times your kitchen is inspected. (The Local, for instance, is rated a "second-level facility" because it prepares food from fresh, raw product.) Volunteers can be responsible for ensuring hand soap, paper towels, and dishwashing chemicals are properly stocked. The public health unit should provide signage around proper food-handling and cleaning practices. As that signage is typically not enough, it's also helpful for the Community Chef to orient staff and volunteers who are new to the kitchen and to consciously monitor proper practices as best they can. Everyone sometimes forgets to wash hands properly or put something away — gentle reminders from anyone, be they chef, staff, or volunteer, who observe such lapses are helpful. Depending on the size of your organization, comprehensive first-aid training may not be necessary, but it is certainly useful to always have at least one staff member and volunteer on hand at all times who does have such training. An appointed health and safety officer can help your organization ensure it follows all regulations.



## RELATED RESOURCES

### Sample Budget for Small Kitchen Items

(Appendix I)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our sincerest thanks goes out to the Community Chefs who generously told us their stories and imparted their kitchen wisdom in the writing of this manual — Scott MacNeil (The Stop CFC), Judy Dempsey (The Table CFC), Jordan Lassaline (formerly of The Local CFC), Grant Mitchell (NorWest Co-op CFC), and Ronald Cockburn (Regent Park CFC).

We would also like to extend a hearty thanks to Jason McBride who did the bulk of research and writing for the manual.

First rooted in the experience of The Stop, this guide has evolved to incorporate the unique experiences of The Table and The Local Community Food Centres. We look forward to continuing to tell the story of the Community Meal program as more CFCs are developed.

## RESOURCES

The Stop generously shared the following resources: Appendix B — 10 Tips On Running a Drop-in Meal Program; Appendix D — Meal Log Template; Appendix E — Sample Weekly Menu; Appendix G — Inventory List; Appendix K — Designing a Volunteer Position; Appendix L — Program Staff Responsibilities for Volunteers; and Appendix M — Supporting Volunteers. The Local CFC provided Appendix I — Sample Budget for Large and Small Kitchen Items.

## PHOTO CREDITS

Thank you to the talented photographers whose images appear throughout the manual:

**Zoe Alexopoulos** (for The Stop Community Food Centre)  
**Judy Dempsey, Sarah Edmunson, and David Zimmerly** (for The Table Community Food Centre)  
**Terry Manzo** (for The Local Community Food Centre)  
**Emily Van Halem** (for Community Food Centres Canada)  
**Ultima Foods** (for Dartmouth North Community Food Centre)

Photo credits by page, listed from top left to bottom right:

Cover: Alexopoulos, Manzo, Ultima Foods, Zimmerly, Alexopoulos	17: The Stop Community Food Centre / @thestopcfc
2: Zimmerly, Zimmerly, Manzo	18: Van Halem, Alexopoulos, Alexopoulos, Van Halem
4: Alexopoulos, Edmunson, Zimmerly, Manzo	20: Alexopoulos, Alexopoulos, Van Halem
5: Alexopoulos	21: Alexopoulos
8: Alexopoulos, Manzo, Edmunson, Alexopoulos	23: Edmunson
9: Edmunson	24: Alexopoulos, Ultima Foods, Alexopoulos, Alexopoulos, Alexopoulos, Manzo
10: Zimmerly	25: Manzo
12: Zimmerly, Zimmerly, Manzo, Manzo	28: Van Halem, Ultima Foods, Van Halem, Zimmerly, Ultima Foods
13: Alexopoulos	30-37: iStock / Getty Images
15: Zimmerly, Dempsey, Zimmerly, Dempsey	
16: Manzo	

# Colcannon Soup

**SOURCE:** NORWEST CO-OP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 12+ SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 2 yellow onions
- 4 bay leaves
- Sprig of fresh thyme
- 8 potatoes (yellow or red), washed or peeled, boiled, and mashed (set the boil water aside for later)
- 2 heads of kale, washed, stemmed, and chopped
- ¼ cup roasted garlic paste
- 1 bunch of green onions, finely chopped
- 1 bunch of parsley, finely chopped
- 1 apple, diced

## Method

1. To prep the garlic paste, pop two heads of garlic into oven at 350°F for a ½ hour or so, or until soft. Slip cloves out of their skin and mash with the broad side of a knife.
2. Cut the yellow onions into four and place in a pot. Add enough water in the pot to cover the onions, add the bay leaves and thyme, set to boil, and then simmer. Once the onions are soft, remove the bay leaves and thyme.
3. Purée the onion and water in a food processor until smooth, or strain the onions (saving the water) and chop them finely.
4. Combine mashed potato, hot potato water, onion purée, kale, roasted garlic, green onions, and parsley and stir until combined.
5. Top with apples.



# Carrot and Rice Soup

**SOURCE:** THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 70 SERVINGS

## Ingredients (Carrot Soup)

- 10 onions, sliced
- 2 heads of garlic, chopped
- 25 lbs carrots, peeled and sliced
- ½ cup coarsley grated ginger
- Dash of ground cumin
- Vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

## Ingredients (Mint Yogurt)

- 1 litre of plain yogurt
- 2 bunches mint leaves, chopped
- Lime juice to taste
- Salt to taste

## To garnish

- About 4 litres cooked brown rice (from about 1 to 1 ½ litres raw rice)
- Something crunchy if you've got time: toasted pumpkin seeds or croutons

## Method:

1. In a large stock pot, sweat the onions in vegetable oil until they are very soft and sweet. Then add the garlic, ginger, and cumin, stirring to combine. Cook for another two or three minutes to soften the flavour of the ginger and garlic. Add the sliced carrots and enough water to cover. Bring to a simmer and let it cook until the carrots are very tender. The amount of time they will need will depend on how thinly they are cut.
2. When the carrots are very soft, purée the soup using a large immersion blender. Season to taste with salt.
3. Prepare the mint yogurt by stirring all the yogurt ingredients together in a bowl.
4. To serve, spoon about a ¼ cup of brown rice into the side of the bowl. Ladle the soup into the opposite side. Pour a little dollop of the mint yogurt close to, but not covering the rice — close enough that it's not stranded out there in the middle of the soup. Whatever you do, if you've managed to keep the rice visible, don't cover it up. If executed correctly, the dish should look like a grassy iceberg about to collide with Hawaii in an orange ocean. Feel free to put your own spin on it though — express yourself. Oh, and add something crunchy if you have the time, like some toasted pumpkin seeds!



# Cabbage Pancakes

**SOURCE:** THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 6 PANCAKES

## Ingredients

- 2 cups chopped, blanched green cabbage
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup rice flour or corn starch
- 6 scallions, finely chopped or 1 red onion
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup grated cold butter
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme
- 1 cup ice water
- 10 ½ tbsp canola oil
- Kosher salt to taste

## Method

1. Combine cabbage, flour, rice flour, scallions, egg, and one cup ice-cold water in a bowl; whisk to combine. Set aside to rest for 10 minutes.
2. Working in batches, heat 1 ½ tbsp oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat; scoop four 2-tbsp portions of batter into skillet; flatten each portion with the back of a spoon. Cook until edges are crisp, about two minutes. Flip pancakes; cook until set, about two minutes. Transfer pancakes to paper towels and wipe out skillet after each batch. Serve sprinkled with salt.

## Notes

- Freeze leftovers for a healthy meal later.
- Don't be intimidated by the list of ingredients. If you're missing something, that's ok. Use whatever vegetables and ingredients that you have on hand and are in season/fresh.
- This is an extremely popular lunch item. Serve with sausage, cabbage stew, and rice. Yum, cabbage!

# Cajun Meatloaf

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE (ADAPTED FROM PAUL PRUDHOMME)

**YIELD:** 8 SERVINGS

## Ingredients (Seasoning Mix)

- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg

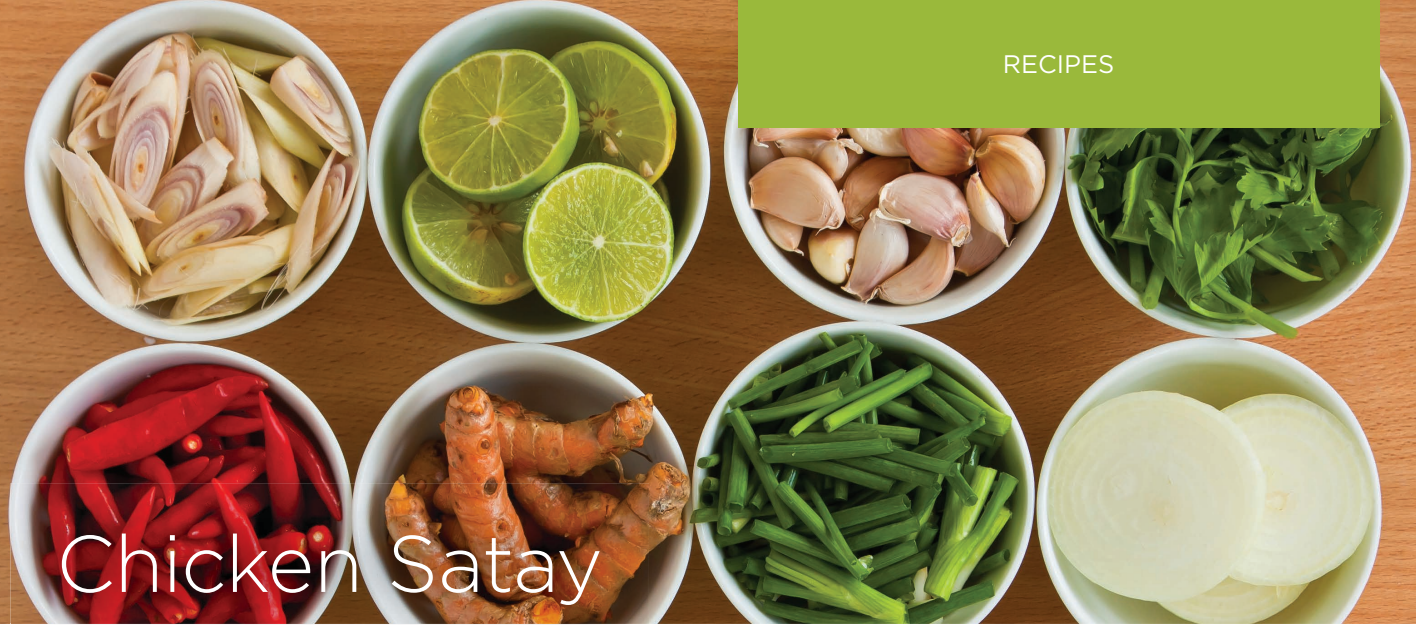
## Ingredients (Meatloaf)

- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- ¾ cup finely chopped onion
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- ½ cup finely chopped green bell pepper
- ¼ cup finely chopped green onion
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup evaporated milk
- ½ cup ketchup
- 2 lbs ground beef
- 2 lbs ground pork
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup breadcrumbs

## Method

1. Combine the seasoning mix ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.
2. Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat.
3. Add the onions, celery, green peppers, green onions, garlic, Worcestershire, and seasoning mix and sauté until mixture starts sticking excessively, about six minutes, stirring occasionally and scraping the pan bottom well.
4. Stir in the milk and ketchup.
5. Continue cooking for about two minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Remove from heat until cool enough to handle.
7. Place ground beef and pork in a bowl.
8. Add the eggs, cooked vegetable mixture, and breadcrumbs. Mix by hand until thoroughly combined.
9. Bake uncovered at 350°F for 25 minutes, then raise heat to 400°F and continue to cook until done, about 35 minutes longer.
10. Cool for 15 minutes and serve with a tomato sauce or creamy mushroom sauce.





**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 6-8 SERVINGS

### Ingredients (Marinated Chicken)

- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- ¼ cup molasses or sweet soy sauce
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 1 tbsp chopped garlic
- ½ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp madras curry powder
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut in strips

### Ingredients (Peanut Sauce)

- 1 cup chopped onions
- 2 tbsp minced garlic
- 4-6 tbsp red curry paste
- 3-5 tbsp lime juice
- 3 cups rich coconut milk
- 2 cups crunchy peanut butter
- Palm or brown sugar to taste
- Fish sauce to taste
- 1 cup finely chopped cilantro leaves

### Method (Marinated Chicken)

1. Combine ingredients for marinade.
2. Coat the chicken with marinade and set aside one hour or overnight.
3. Refrigerate unused marinade. (It will keep for three weeks.)
4. Skewer chicken, grill, and serve with peanut sauce.

### Method (Peanut Sauce)

1. Sauté onions and garlic in a small amount of vegetable oil until cooked but not brown.
2. Stir in curry paste and cook another two minutes.
3. Add lime juice, coconut milk, peanut butter, and blend over a low heat.
4. Add cilantro.
5. Add sugar and fish sauce to taste.
6. Add water if the sauce is too thick.





# Magic Meatballs

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 30 SMALL MEATBALLS

## Ingredients

- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp salt
- Pinch of ground pepper
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- 1 tbsp minced fresh parsley
- 1 large tsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp very finely minced green onion

## Method

1. Mix all ingredients together with clean hands until mixture is completely blended.
2. Divide mixture into three equal piles.
3. Divide each pile into 10 little balls, to equal 30 total.
4. Spread on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
5. Bake at 375°F for 15-20 minutes or until firm.

# Picadillo-stuffed Sweet Potatoes

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 4 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 4 sweet potatoes, washed
- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- ¼ cup raisins
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tsp chopped green chilies (canned)
- Pinch of ground cloves and ground cinnamon
- Salt and pepper
- Shredded cheddar cheese
- Plain yogurt

## Method

1. Wrap sweet potatoes in foil and bake at 400°F for 50 minutes or until soft. Set aside to cool slightly.
2. Brown meat in a heavy frying pan.
3. Add onion and garlic, cook another five minutes.
4. Add raisins, apple, tomatoes, chilies, and spices.
5. Simmer, uncovered about 15 minutes.
6. Season with salt and pepper.
7. Split the sweet potatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out a few spoonfuls.
8. Mix the scooped sweet potato into the meat mixture.
9. Fill the potato shells with the mixture and top with cheese.
10. Bake another 15-30 minutes or until cheese is melted.
11. Top with a spoonful of plain yogurt and serve.



# Herb-crusted Vegetarian Pizza

**SOURCE:** REGENT PARK COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 8-10 SERVINGS

## Ingredients (Garlic and Chives Dough)

- 4 cups flour (2 ½ cups whole wheat & 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour)
- 1 pkg (7 ml) instant yeast
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 ¼-1 ½ cups of warm water
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp fresh chives

## Ingredients (Toppings)

- 2-3 cups pizza sauce spiced with ½ tsp thyme, ½ tsp oregano, ½ tsp marjoram, and ½ tsp dry mustard
- ¾ cup spinach leaves
- 2-4 cups shredded cheese blend (at a 4:1:1 ratio of mozzarella, asiago, and old cheddar)
- ¼ cup roasted eggplant
- ¼ cup roasted zucchini
- ¼ cup sliced mushrooms
- ¼ cup chopped broccoli
- ½ cup chopped or sliced tri-colour sweet peppers (yellow, orange, and red)
- 1/8 tsp salt and ground pepper (optional)

## Method

1. In a small bowl, mix and sift flour and add salt and yeast. Make a well in the centre of the flour, add minced garlic and chives, then slowly add warm water. Mix with a wooden spoon, add olive oil and mix until it forms a ball. Knead the dough for about 8-10 minutes until it is soft and elastic but not too sticky. Add more flour if needed.
2. Put the dough in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and leave in a warm place for about one hour, until it doubles in size.
3. Preheat the oven to 475°F.
4. Divide the dough into fourths and roll each piece to desired thickness. Transfer to oiled baking sheet(s).
5. Spread the tomato sauce evenly over dough, then add all the toppings, finishing with the cheese.
6. Season with optional salt and pepper if the sauce is unseasoned.
7. Bake for 10-15 minutes until the cheese is melted and the crust is golden brown.





# Chickpea Patties

**SOURCE:** NORWEST CO-OP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** ABOUT 12 PATTIES

## Ingredients

- 4 x 540 ml cans of chickpeas
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 2 tbsp fresh garlic, chopped
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- 4 eggs
- 1 tbsp salt
- 2 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp kasoori mehti (see notes)
- ½ cup nutritional yeast
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- Oil for frying onions, sunflower or cold-pressed canola
- ½ cup+ flour and/or extra egg as needed
- Chopped fresh herbs such as parsley, thyme, and/or cilantro (optional)

## Method

1. Pulse chickpeas in food processor or crush by hand so they're broken and rough.
2. Sauté onions in oil with black pepper until soft. Add garlic and continue cooking until slightly browned. Let cool.
3. Combine all ingredients except fresh herbs and flour in a large bowl. Mix thoroughly, adding flour or extra egg until it sticks together, but not so much that it gets doughy.
4. Oil a frying pan and heat to medium temperature, frying a small piece in the pan to test for texture and seasoning.
5. Adjust seasoning as needed, adding the optional fresh herbs into the mixture at this point. Mix until combined.
6. In batches of three or four, scoop the mixture with a two-ounce ice cream scoop into a well-oiled frying pan, and gently form into patties by pushing down on top with a heat-proof spatula. Cook on medium heat, watching edges for golden colour. Once golden, flip and crisp the other side.
7. Continue until mix is done. Cooked patties freeze well for future use.

## Notes

Most ingredients can be substituted with another of its kind, e.g. lentils for chickpeas, olive oil for sesame. The recipe also lends itself well to using up leftover rice, beans, oatmeal, roasted vegetables, etc. Just make sure to maintain the ratio of breadcrumbs and eggs to the remaining ingredients as they bind everything together.

Kasoori mehti are dried fenugreek leaves found in East Indian groceries, and sometime larger retailers. They have a wonderful, deep, and unique flavour that is bitter like celery, powerful like oregano, but with an almost buttery presence. A good North American substitution would be summer savory.

# Wild Rice Johnnycakes

**SOURCE:** NORWEST CO-OP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 4-6 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- ¼ cup corn flour
- ¼ cup corn meal
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 cup buttermilk
- ½ cup cooked wild rice
- Plus butter and sunflower oil for the pan

## Method

1. Combine the dry ingredients and mix well.
2. Add the egg, buttermilk, and cooked rice. Stir until combined, but do not over-mix.
3. Let the batter sit for 5-10 minutes, until bubbles appear.
4. Heat a non-stick or cast-iron skillet on medium heat. Add one tsp butter and one tbsp sunflower oil and wait until butter stops foaming.
5. Ladle batter into pan, either making one or a few smaller cakes.
6. Wait until bubbles appear and pop on the surface, and check the underside for crispiness and a golden colour. Flip and cook for two more minutes.
7. Repeat steps 4-6 until all the johnnycakes are cooked.
8. Plate and garnish with desired accompaniments. Try frozen blueberries warmed in a pan with some maple syrup or fruit juice with a dollop of cottage cheese, liberally covered in toasted oats and hemp seeds.



# Summer Bean Salad

**SOURCE:** THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 8 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 2 cups green beans, trimmed and cut into 1" lengths
- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 can red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium red onion, finely chopped
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh herbs of your choice, chopped (mint, basil, parsley, dill, tarragon and/or cilantro)
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup white vinegar
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper

## Method

1. Steam green beans until tender. Cool in cold water and drain.
2. Toss all beans with onions, herbs, and pepper.
3. Combine oil, vinegar, and sugar. Toss with beans.
4. Chill at least four hours or overnight.
5. Before serving, stir in salt and check for seasoning.



# Savoury Cornbread

**SOURCE:** REGENT PARK COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

**YIELD:** 250 SERVINGS

## Ingredients

- 25 cups cornmeal
- 22 cups flour
- 8 ½ cups sugar
- 1 ½ cups baking powder
- 5 tbsp salt
- 1 tsp mace or ground nutmeg
- 11 cups milk
- 10 cups yogurt (2%)
- 20 eggs, well beaten
- ¾ cup canola oil
- 4 cups Monterey Jack cheese
- 2-4 cups jalapeño pepper

## Method

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and mace. Make a well in the centre of the dry mixture. Set aside.
2. In another bowl, combine milk, yogurt, and canola oil. Add egg mixture to the dry mixture then add cheese and jalapeño peppers. Stir until moistened.
3. Spoon batter into greased pan(s), bake at 425°F for about 20 to 25 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the centre of the bread comes out clean.

## GOOD FOOD PRINCIPLES

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

### 1. Taking action from the individual to the systemic — food access, food skills, and civic engagement

The poverty and food issues we see manifested in low-income communities have multi-faceted and complex causes and solutions, and there is thus power in individual-level to systemic-level approaches. We believe that all people have the right to the basics of a dignified life: a decent income, housing and employment, access to healthy food. Together we need to fight for these rights and create opportunities for those affected to make their voices heard. Until we achieve these goals, we can work to help meet basic needs in the short term and to maximize the choices available to people by providing them with skills that enable them to choose, grow, and prepare good food. Offering programs that span the range of access, skills, and engagement on food and hunger creates relevance and multiple points of connection, while creating the potential for a critical mass of staff and programs.

### 2. Believing and investing in the power of good food

We believe good food has the power to build health, connect people, and inspire people to become engaged in issues that matter to them. We strive to make good food a priority and to provide food through our programs that is delicious, healthy, sustainably produced, and pleasurable to eat.

### 3. Creating an environment of respect and community leadership

We believe that respect — for the inherent value, assets, and potential to contribute of all people — should underpin all of our work. Thus we strive to avoid the signs, symbols, and procedures that contribute to the stigma often experienced by people attending food programs in charitable organizations, and to positively communicate our respect for all participants through respectful procedures and inviting community involvement. We believe that people are healthiest and happiest when they are making their own choices, meeting their own needs, and contributing to their communities. We strive to empower those with lived experience of hunger and poverty with a platform to speak up against these issues and help others in the community who are struggling with them too. In addition, inviting community involvement breaks down the binary between the ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’ of charity so dominant in many emergency food programs.

### 4. Meeting people where they’re at

We work to meet people where they are at by recognizing and striving to meet the needs of participants at multiple levels in ways that are relevant to their actual circumstances. By recognizing that people’s skills and goals are diverse and that many bring their own assets to the table, in all areas we work with people toward self-identified change, without judging or preaching. We work to ensure that there is as much pleasure and value in the process of reaching individual and community goals as there is in reaching the outcome sought.

### 5. Aiming high for our organizations and our community

We believe that in order to do their important work, community food organizations need to be properly resourced. Volunteers are an important part of our work but cannot sustain the entire sector — private philanthropy and government must also play a role in supporting organizations that are properly staffed and funded to be able to create impact. In return, we believe in demonstrating our value by holding ourselves to a high standard of performance and impact.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## 10 TIPS ON RUNNING A DROP-IN MEAL PROGRAM

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

This document offers ten tips for running a Drop-in Meal program, from how to manage volunteers and volume to ingredients and planning.

**1. Be adaptable:** Flexibility is key when you're relying on donations, incorporating seasonality, and working with what's available or what needs to be used to prevent wastage.

**2. Have a back-up plan:** On occasion we've run out of the main meal on very busy days. The work doesn't stop once the cooking is done: always keep your eyes tuned to the quantity of food and number of participants and be ready to whip up a pasta or rice to stretch a meal if needed.

**3. Have FUN!** A positive volunteer experience is important. Having fun will keep people coming back week after week. We always play music, dance, have discussions, and talk celebrity gossip. It makes the food taste better and the kitchen a more vibrant place, and that energy feeds into other the areas of the Community Food Centre.

**4. Ingredient and influence:** Choose a key ingredient or a type of cuisine and let that influence the meal. You can focus on a protein or a vegetable that you have lots of, and then build that into a type of cuisine. For example if you have lot of cauliflower, kale, and potato and want to go with a Southeast Asian influence, you could make an aloo gobi roti. Of course, a different influence could have turned these same surplus ingredients into a number of different dishes.

**5. Engage volunteers:** Some folks are new to the kitchen but many have a whole host of culinary expertise. Celebrate their knowledge and put it to use. We've learned a ton from handing over the reins to community members in the kitchen. For others with less experience, we use teachable moments to further engage volunteers and help them sharpen their culinary skills.

**6. Go big:** When you have extra hands to help in the kitchen, make double so you can freeze a meal for a day when you have limited help or want a day off.

**7. Use leftovers:** Leftovers are like head starts — something that's already been prepared for the meal. It only takes a little creativity to transform yesterday's extras into an element of today's hit dish.

**8. Delegate and participate:** Cooking for 200 people is not something you should do alone. You have help for a reason so remember to delegate jobs. That said, your participation is what sets the tone; it shows volunteers the importance of a given task and also instructs them on how to do it.

**9. Mind the spice:** Some of us love the heat but when cooking for a crowd you have to accommodate everyone's tastes — often that means keeping the heat to a minimum.

**10. Veggies:** Jam as many vegetables as you can into whatever you're cooking. Our job is to provide the most hearty and nutritionally dense meal we can for our participants. Loading on the veggies is a great way to do this.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## SAMPLE COMMUNITY CHEF JOB DESCRIPTION

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

### Position Summary

[Blurb about your organization]

[Organization name] is looking for a talented, motivated chef to join our Community Food Centre team to provide leadership in our kitchen. The ideal candidate is someone who is passionate about good food, and wants to contribute to ensuring that everyone has access to it. S/he has an understanding of the power of food and the many positive impacts it can have: from supporting the health and social well-being of our community members, to building social ties to supporting local farmers. The Community Chef will be a great cook whose food models the principle that healthy food can also be delicious food. S/he will possess strong leadership skills balanced with an ability to create a supportive environment in the kitchen for a diverse team of volunteers, enabling them to hone their own food and leadership skills.

### Responsibilities

Oversee preparation of meals for our Community Meal program

- Plan menus for the Community Meal program that reflect our philosophy and commitment to healthy food
- Support and oversee team of staff and volunteers
- Provide leadership to the Community Meal preparation
- Provide basic training and instruction to volunteers
- Oversee health and safety in the kitchen

Coordination of the kitchen

- Source, order, and manage inventory of food for Community Meals and basic kitchen supplies
- Assist with sourcing of food for other community programs as needed
- Ensure high standard of health and safety in the kitchen space
- Oversee maintenance of equipment and resources in the kitchen
- Liaise with other users of our kitchen space to ensure standards and best practices are shared

Support cooking and nutrition education

- Support other program staff to develop cooking skills
- Engage in cooking demonstrations
- Advocate for healthy food in our community

Participate as a [Org. name] team member

- Attend staff meetings, training, events as needed
- Model professional behaviour and positive communication with participants, volunteers, and partners
- Promote culture of health and safety within our space
- Represent [Organization name] in the community
- Interview, screen, and supervise assigned placement students

### Qualifications and Experience

- 3 years of experience with large-scale food preparation and kitchen management
- Diploma in a related field of study (culinary, nutrition, social work) an asset
- Demonstrated ability to plan and prepare healthy, delicious meals for 150-250 people
- Experience with budgeting, sourcing food, and working with suppliers
- Experience working with volunteers and supervisory skills an asset
- Experience with program planning and evaluation

### Knowledge and Skills

- Commitment to and knowledge of food security issues, knowledge of nutrition
- Ability to work sensitively with people of diverse backgrounds who experience poverty/discrimination
- Experience with community/social services sector through work or volunteer experience an asset
- Patient with a good sense of humour and an ability to inspire and motivate others

**Organization:**

**Location:**

**Position type** [permanent/temporary/contract]:

**Hours:**

**Supervisor:**

**Salary:**



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## MEAL LOG TEMPLATE

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

<b>Name of Staff:</b>		<b>Date:</b>		
<b># Participants:</b>				
<b># Volunteers:</b>		<b># Vol. Hours:</b>		
<b>Description of menu:</b>		<b>Produce from the garden:</b>		
<b>Key Ingredients:</b>	<b>Quantity:</b>	<b>Local: Y/N</b>	<b>Organic: Y/N</b>	<b>Source:</b>
<b>Food Sources:</b>	<b>% of Meal:</b>			
	<b>Cost:</b>			
<b>Total:</b>				
<b>Kitchen Skills Imparted:</b>				
<b>Stories and Feedback:</b>				



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## SAMPLE WEEKLY MENU

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

Feb 24, 2014	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>Breakfast</b>	Boiled eggs Toast Cheese Yogurt Apples, oranges, pears	Molletes: Refried black beans, salsa, and cheese on English muffin Boiled egg Fruit salad		Granola banana split with yogurt and peach jam Fruit salad Toast Cheese	Big breakfast Scramble with onions, peppers, and cheese Roasted crispy home fries Chicken sausage Toast Fruit
<b>Lunch</b>	Kale and sweet potato gratin White kidney bean rosemary purée Green beans or broccoli/cauliflower (garlic, thyme, chili) Salad	Venison sausage stew in onion grainy mustard gravy with lentils and mashed potato Veg: Tofu and mushroom sausages Chickpea, cucumber salad	Sweet potato oven fries Greek salad Hummous Pita chips Tatziki	Senagalese sweet potato and peanut butter soup	Clean out the fridge
<b>Other programs</b>					
<b>Events</b>					
<b>Prep List</b>	Make salsa Pull grated cheddar from freezer Bake banana bread Pull venison sausage from freezer	Peel sweet potato		Dice potatoes (no steam) Crack eggs Slice peppers and onions Tray sausage if using pork	
<b>Ordering</b>	<b>No Frills:</b> <b>Hilite:</b> <b>Gasparos:</b> <b>Reliable:</b>	<b>100KM Foods:</b> The usual Milk <b>Reliable:</b> Coconut milk	<b>No Frills:</b> <b>Gasparos:</b> <b>Hilite:</b>	<b>Hilite:</b> Bananas Melons Oranges	



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## PUTTING OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT FOR COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

*This guide was developed for anyone who sources food for food programs, be they Community Meals, Good Food Markets, or Community Kitchens. Supporting local agriculture is an important part of the Community Food Centre model, so we created a guide to help staff navigate the sourcing, ordering, and ongoing communications needed to develop lasting relationships with local farmers.*

In order to thrive, local, sustainable food systems need localized investment and sustainable financial investment. Increasingly, consumers are heeding this call by frequenting farmers' markets, participating in 'community supported agriculture' programs, and calling for policies that support small-scale and ecologically sustainable farming.

Yet for individuals and families living on low incomes, high-quality local food is beyond what their budgets will allow. This is not to say that local food is too expensive; in fact, we believe that the price of food must reflect an investment in sustaining the land, the time taken to care for animals, and a living wage paid to workers. The overarching low cost of food throughout the food system has been made possible by unsustainable farming practices, factory farming, and underpaid labour. While these are large-scale problems in many ways requiring large-scale, policy-based solutions, there is still a significant role for consumers and institutional buyers to help support local food systems. We can do this by putting our money where our mouth is.

Community Food Centres (CFCs) and Good Food Organizations (GFOs) can play a role in improving access to fresh, local food by purchasing it for their hampers, community meals, and other programs. While those living on low incomes or social assistance may not be able to afford these foods in their daily life, gaining access through a community food program reflects the organization's commitment to providing good food for all, no matter their income.

Developing local procurement practices for CFCs and GFOs will help address both issues of accessibility and supply within the local food chain. It will also ensure higher-quality, more nutritious meals or hampers for those people accessing the organization's services. Because sourcing local food is sometimes complicated by the state of distribution infrastructure for smaller, sustainable farms, this document is primarily aimed at helping organizations jump ahead on the learning curve to anticipate challenges and plan accordingly.

CFCs and GFOs can also help by playing a role in promoting local food and helping others to understand that there is more to "value" in food than a cheap price tag. For those who can afford it, allocating more of their budgets to food that sustains farmers, the environment, and our food security is a worthwhile investment (one that has the added bonus of often meaning that the consumer is getting the most delicious and healthiest product).

Given the higher price of local, sustainable food, this may mean raising funds that are specifically earmarked for this purpose. For a segment of individual and corporate donors, this is a value worth supporting. One of the methods we have found successful for connecting this goal with a revenue source is the signature "Share the Health" fundraising event that features local chefs and farmers, offering a chance to promote local food and to raise money dedicated to purchasing local sustainable food.



DOWNLOAD

Download this appendix in full at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## INVENTORY LIST

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

Inventory ID	Name	Description	Unit Price	Quantity in Stock	Reorder Level	Reorder Time in Days	Quantity in Reorder
	Flours	AP		3x20kg	10kg	2	3x20kg
		Spelt		1x20kg	5kg	2	1x20kg
		Buckwheat		1x20kg	5kg	2	1x20kg
		Duram Atta		1x10kg	10kg	2	1x10kg
		Corn Meal		2x20kg	10kg	2	2x20kg
		Quick Oats		2x20kg	10kg	1	2x20kg
	Rice	Parboiled		1x40kg	10kg	1	1x40kg
		Brown		2x10kg	10kg	1	2x10kg
	Grains	Quino		2x10kg	0	2	2x10kg
		Grits		6x5kg	0	2	6x5kg
	Canned	Couscous		2xcase	1/2 bucket	1	2xcase
		Bulgar		1x20g	5kg	1	1x20kg
		Tomato		2xcase	3	1	2xcase
		Chickpea		1xcase	3	1	1xcase
	Dry Pulses	Black Bean		1xcase	3	1	1xcase
		Coconut Milk		1xcase	5	1	1xcase
		Green Lentil		1x10kg	0	1	1x10kg
		French Lentil		2xcase	1/4 bucket	1	2xcase
		Red Lentil		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Chickpea		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Navy Bean		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Yellow Split Pea		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
	Pasta	Red Kidney Bean		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Black Bean		1x10kg	1/4 bucket	1	1x10kg
		Rigatoni		2xcase	0	1	2xcase
		Rice Noodle		1xcase	0	1	1xcase
	Leavening	Chow Mein		1xcase	0	1	1xcase
		Active Dry Yeast		6 pcs	2pcs	1	6 pcs
	Baking	Baking Powder		1 large can	1/4 can	1	1 large can
		Baking Soda		1 Jug	1/4 jug	1	1 Jug
	Sugar	Vanilla Extract		1 Jug	1/4 jug	1	1 Jug
		Brown		1xcase	3 bags	1	1xcase
	Spreads	Granulated White		6x20g	1 bag	1	6x20g
		Liquid Honey		12x500ml	3 jars	1	12x500ml
		Mustard, Grainy		1x5kg	1/4 bag	1	1x5kg
		Mustard, Dijon		1x5kg	1/4 bag	1	1x5kg
	Salt	Mustard, Specialty		1x5kg	1/4 bag	1	1x5kg
		Peanut Butter		1x10kg	1/4 tub	1	1x10kg
	Spices	Kosher		1xcase	3 boxes	1	1xcase
		Coriander, Whole		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Coriander, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Fennel Seed		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cumin Seed		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cumin, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Peppercorns, Whole		1 Jug	1/4 jug	1	1 Jug
		Fenugreek		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Chili flakes		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Sesame Seed		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Celery Seed		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Mustard Seed, yellow		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Mustard Seed, Brown		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Mustard Seed, Black		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Rice Flakes		Optional	0	1	Optional
		Chili Powder		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Mustard Powder		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Oregano, Dry		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Cardamom, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cardamom, Green		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cardamom, Black		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Paprika, Sweet		1 Jug	0	1	1 Jug
		Paprika, Smoked		1 bag	0	1	1 bag
		Kaffir Lime Leaf		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Star Anise		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Turmeric, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		5-Spice		Never again	0	1	Never again
		Cinnamon, Bark		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker
		Cinnamon, Ground		1 shaker	0	1	1 shaker



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## GOOD FOOD RULES

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

*Over the years, we have developed some straightforward approaches to healthy food and healthy eating that are intended to have a positive impact on the physical and mental health of the people we work with, our environment, and other players in the food system. We understand that there are severe constraints on the choices that many people can make, but we try to empower them to push back against these constraints to create as big a space as possible to take control over their own food. Though we care a lot about food, we try not to be zealots and to remember that above all, food should build community and be a source of pleasure.*

### 1. GOOD FOOD IS GOOD

We prioritize good food in everything we do. We believe good food is a priority, not an incidental, and that everyone — regardless of income — deserves to have it. We believe good food can build health, culture, and morale, and that a good meal can be the first step in many journeys.

### 2. IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT

The food we distribute and serve reflects our respect for our community members. If it's wilted, dented, sub-standard or doesn't contribute to health, we'd rather throw it away than pass it on. We work to ensure that we have enough resources to provide wholesome food in all programs.

### 3. IT MATTERS WHERE IT CAME FROM

We recognize that our food choices have impacts that stretch beyond our individual wellbeing — that they also affect our environment, our economy, farmers, etc. We “put our money where our mouth is” by buying local and sustainable foods whenever we can, and by encouraging others to do so as well.

### 4. HEATHY FOOD IS SIMPLE

Good nutrition doesn't need to be painful or confusing. For most of us, it's as simple as eating a variety of foods in moderation, lots of fruits and vegetables, and fewer highly processed foods. We encourage a common-sense approach to healthy eating that involves making the best choices we can most of the time, but still leaves room for joy and pleasure.

### 5. FOOD IS POWER

Cooking and growing your own food feels good because it allows you to control your ingredients, save money, and provide for yourself and your family and friends. We strive to create hands-on, inspiring opportunities for people to cook and grow food, and to share in the pleasure and empowerment that comes from knowing how to nourish themselves and others.

### 6. FOOD SHOULD TASTE GOOD

What we like to eat is important. We strive to respect personal and cultural food preferences, and to find the sweet spot where delicious meets nutritious. We think it's great to try new foods, but we try to build on tastes instead of being preachy or pushy about food choices.

### 7. FOOD BRINGS US TOGETHER

We're always looking for opportunities to get together around food. Coming together in the kitchen, dining room and garden allows us to break down barriers by focusing on a shared human need and the unique experiences, tastes, and skills that we each bring to the table.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## SAMPLE BUDGET FOR SMALL KITCHEN ITEMS

SOURCE: THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, STRATFORD

Category	Quantity	Item	Cost
<b>Pots and Pans</b>			
	3	Large stock pots	\$ 300.00
	4	Frying pans	\$ 240.00
	3	Sauce pans	\$ 45.00
<b>Small Kitchen Appliances</b>			
		Hobart mixer	\$ 1,000.00
		Small mixer	\$ 400.00
		Large immersion blender	\$ 1,000.00
		Steamer	\$ 700.00
		Industrial toaster	\$ 1,000.00
		Microwave	\$ 600.00
<b>Pans &amp; Trays</b>			
	10	Hotel pans	\$ 200.00
	10	Bus pans	\$ 100.00
	20	Sheet pans	\$ 160.00
	1	Rolling tray	\$ 130.00
	8	Dishwasher trays	\$ 120.00
<b>Storage &amp; Garbage Containers</b>			
	20	Plastic storage containers	\$ 150.00
	4	Garbage cans	\$ 120.00
<b>Cooking Knives</b>			
	10	Chef knives	\$ 400.00
	5	Bread knives	\$ 100.00
	10	Paring knives	\$ 150.00
<b>Misc. Utensils</b>			
		Flippers, whisks, spoons, etc.	\$ 300.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 7,215.00</b>



DOWNLOAD


Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## SAMPLE POSTERS FOR A COMMUNITY MEAL

SOURCE: THE LOCAL AND THE TABLE COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES

**60+ Midweek  
Lunch Out**  
at *The Local Community Food Centre*

**Every Wednesday**  
Lunch is served at 11:30  
followed by a light program at 12:30.  
No cost or by donation.



**The Local**  
Community Food Centre

The Local Community Food Centre  
612 Erie St., Stratford  
[www.thelocalcfc.org](http://www.thelocalcfc.org)  
519-508-3663



**free FAMILY\*  
DINNER**



\*Family: any combo of children/youth and adults

at  
**the Table** Community Food Centre  
**4:30-6:30, Saturday, March 22**  
Kid-friendly food and fun!

**the Table**  
community food centre

*These posters promoting Community Meals set a positive tone, while being creative and concise.*



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## DESIGNING A VOLUNTEER POSITION

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

A well-defined volunteer position will benefit both the volunteers for a particular program area and the person coordinating it. This document describes the thinking that goes into designing a volunteer position; including shift length, task lists, assistance, supervision and working with other volunteers.

Volunteer positions at The Stop are designed so that they provide:

- two- to four-hour shifts;
- a clearly defined task list;
- a reasonable workload and appropriately sized team to complete the tasks;
- a supervisor to provide support and direction; and,
- other volunteers to share the work experience with.

### Length of time

Most of our jobs are designed to be four-hour shifts. Attendance is typically once a week. If a longer period of time must be covered by volunteers, break the volunteer position into two shorter shifts.

### Clear task list

Consider the following points when designing a task list:

- List all of the things that the volunteer is expected to do. If the list seems too long, introduce a second volunteer job with different tasks.
- Ask yourself, is this a worthwhile job to have? Is it enough for someone to commit to and return to on a weekly basis? Where does the job satisfaction lie?

### Reasonable workload and assistance

Consider how many people you will need to complete the tasks that you have. A volunteer is discouraged by not enough work and equally by too much work. Save projects for those days when there is not enough regular work in order to keep the volunteers busy. Ease the workload on busy days by calling in extra support or reducing your expectations for that day (without impinging on the program requirements).

### A supervisor

Even experienced volunteers need to have a staff person on call in case they have a question, or simply to acknowledge their hard work. This demonstrates that we care about what they are doing. A supervisor is appreciated more if they share in the tasks that need to be done (even if just a little). Don't just order volunteers around.

### Other volunteers

Some people like to work alone, but most of us gain satisfaction from the companionship of our colleagues. Much can be learnt about dealing with people who are different from ourselves and working as a team. Design volunteer positions so that the volunteer has other volunteers around (even if they are not doing the same job) so that they can enjoy these benefits. When possible, arrange for time for a shared sit-down for a snack, beverage or meal to provide for social opportunities for volunteers.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)



## PROGRAM STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

While Volunteer Coordinators help to orient and accept new volunteers, a great deal of responsibility is placed on program staff to supervise, support and guide volunteers. This document addresses the role of program staff in ensuring a positive volunteer experience.

### Staff training

It is the responsibility of the Program Coordinator to train all program staff to manage volunteers appropriately. This includes:

- ensuring that the respect policy applies to volunteers as well as all others in the organization's environment (respect by volunteers and to volunteers by staff and participants);
- giving clear instructions;
- giving on-the-job training;
- effectively delegating to ensure volunteers are kept busy but not overworked;
- troubleshooting volunteer workloads; and,
- dealing with conflict and other issues.

### Volunteer welcome and orientation

A welcome and orientation are very important for new volunteers. This includes an orientation to the space and people, to health and safety issues, and to the beginning of your working relationship.

- Orientation: Welcome them to your program and provide a tour and orientation to the space, the staff, and other volunteers on their shift.
- Health and Safety: Volunteers must learn the health and safety aspects of the job as soon as they arrive. Consider having a hand-out on health and safety in your program for them to read or have another volunteer go through it with them before they begin their first shift.
- Building a working relationship: Learn their name; take an interest in them; explain aspects of the program

as you work together; and tell them to come to you and other staff if they have any questions or feedback about the program.

### Task allocation

Match the job to the person. Consider how long they've been in the program, their capacity to learn new tasks (as you're able to assess it), their physical capacity to do the task, and the difficulty of the task. Until you know them better, check back with them regularly to see how they're doing. Consider starting them on easier tasks and building up to more difficult ones. Provide a buddy who can spend time introducing them to various tasks and share their knowledge of the program.

### On-the-job training

On-the-job training can be done by staff or by using a buddy system with another volunteer. Follow the steps below to train on the job.

Step	Action
1	Describe the job to the volunteer.
2	Show them the job by doing it yourself.
3	Watch them do the job and provide feedback.
4	Ask them if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have understood</li> <li>• are comfortable doing this task</li> <li>• have any questions</li> </ul>
5	Tell them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when to stop (when there are no more eggs, when you are tired)</li> <li>• who to ask if they need help</li> <li>• what to do next</li> </ul>



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

## SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

SOURCE: THE STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, TORONTO

Although volunteers don't get paid for the work that they do, their contribution to the Community Food Centres is invaluable. Over the years, we've developed many ways to support, recognize, and celebrate the incredible work that our volunteers do. We offer support to our volunteers in many ways at The Stop, not least by providing a welcoming and supportive work environment. In addition to this we can provide:

### Letters for public transit allowance

People on Ontario Works can get a public transit allowance if they volunteer. We are often asked to either write letters confirming that volunteers have committed to the position for six months or to fill in a Volunteer Details form provided to the volunteer by Ontario Works. Some volunteers on the Ontario Disability Support Program also get the transit allowance although this is now being phased out.

We write an average of five letters/forms per month. The Social Service Case Worker may call to confirm the letter is genuine. At times volunteers are told they cannot continue receiving the allowance if they remain volunteering with us and they need to move to a different volunteer location. This disrupts our program because we have to find a new volunteer and it also threatens the bonds that the volunteer has established with our community through their volunteering. We do everything we can to move volunteers within our programs in order that they can continue to get the allowance and stay within our community as a volunteer.

A number of volunteers have remained volunteering with us but gone on to find another position in order to continue receiving their TTC allowance. There is increasing emphasis on The Stop to prove that the volunteer position will lead to work skills for the volunteer.

### References for immigration, jobs, community service hours

Volunteers have asked for and received reference letters for immigration, jobs, community service hours, and student volunteer hours. To obtain immigration or jobs references a volunteer should have completed the required 4 to 6 months volunteering with us.

### Training

A variety of training is provided to volunteers in our programs, depending on their specific assignment.

- **The Safe Food Handling certificate** training is given.
- **The George Brown "Creating Health" course** is provided four times per year to our kitchen and drop-in volunteers.
- **In-house one-off training** specific to programs, e.g. anti-oppression / challenging stereotypes, etc.
- **Our garden workshops** are available to all volunteers.
- **Bake oven training** is provided as needed.
- **The Education program** does training specific to that program.
- **All volunteers** get on-the-job training specific to their program and tasks.

### Access to services

Volunteers are invited and welcomed to use service at the Community Food Centre, in the same way that other community members access services. These services include:

- **Food Bank:** All volunteers are allowed to access the Food Bank once per month. Volunteers do not need to live in the catchment area.
- **Drop-In:** All volunteers can have breakfast or lunch after their shift.
- **Healthy Beginnings:** Volunteers have access to the daycare while they are volunteering.

### Tokens for public transit

Tokens are available for those who need them in order to be able to volunteer (i.e. if you live at a distance that requires you to take transit or if you are disabled).

### Good Food Market membership

All volunteers are welcome to become members of the Good Food Market. This entitles volunteers to a membership card. Each time a volunteer completes a shift they receive a stamp on their card. Four stamps on a card entitles the volunteer to \$10 of produce at the Good Food Market.



DOWNLOAD

Download this and other appendices at:  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFCCMealsManual)

**KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL:**  
**HOW TO START A COMMUNITY MEAL PROGRAM**

is produced by Community Food Centres Canada  
with the help of The Stop, The Table, The Local, NorWest Co-op,  
and Regent Park Community Food Centres

The manual was developed  
for use by staff at  
Community Food Centres and  
Good Food Organizations



[www.goodfoodorganizations.ca](http://www.goodfoodorganizations.ca)



**Community Food Centres Canada** provides resources and a proven approach to partner organizations across Canada to create Community Food Centres that bring people together to grow, cook, share, and advocate for good food. CFCC also works with the broader food movement to build greater capacity for impact and to empower communities to work toward a healthy and fair food system.



Kitchen Confidential: How to start a community meal program by Community Food Centres Canada (2015) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. All photos in this document are copyright the photographers and therefore the above Creative Commons licensing applies only to the text herein.

**Contact Us**

80 Ward St. Suite 100, Toronto ON M6H 4A6  
Tel: 416 531 8826 - [www.cfccanada.ca](http://www.cfccanada.ca) - [info@cfccanada.ca](mailto:info@cfccanada.ca)  
 @aplaceforfood Community Food Centres Canada

Charitable # 83391 4484 RR0001