

**The Nuts and Bolts
of Community**

Simple Series 2020

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Common Meals

Sheila Hoffman + Spencer Beard

Seattle

We would like to acknowledge that we are coming to you from the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, past and present. We honor with gratitude the land itself and the Duwamish Tribe.



THE LAST THANKSGIVING





Eating together is the “secret sauce” of community.





Potlucks

Easy to do & Social
Everyone brings something.
You know they can eat at
least what you bring.
But there may not be much
else you want to eat...

Supper Club

One household cooks.
Everyone else is a guest.
Everyone's needs are met.



Our Extensive Research

In our area we visited and ate with:

- Songaia - they have a shared pantry/buying club
- Jackson Place - they shared all their forms with us

While travelling to Tucson we also visited & ate with:

- Stone Curves
- Sonora

We met with Joani Blank both on the phone and in person and learned SO much. She wrote the seminal piece on common meals. Sadly she has since passed away but we have a PDF of her article to share with you in our resources.

We spoke on the phone with:

- Temescal Commons - because they're our size
- And many more too numerous to list.

We looked for what was the most common approach and we looked for communities about our size.



The Most Common Scenario

- Only those who want to participate to the work load do so. People sign up as lead cooks if they are comfortable cooking and as assistants and/or cleanup if not. Sometimes there's also a food shopping team.
- Members can pay for and attend meals without contributing to the work load and pay for their guests.
- The cook announces the meal and the estimated cost per person and folks sign up with a specified deadline.
- After the meal the cook (or shopping team) adds up how much the food cost, then divides it by how many adults and children attended and everyone is billed that amount.
- Usually a monthly/quarterly accounting system rather than paying as you go.
- There's typically an age threshold for the youngest children to be free and then it goes to half-price at a certain range before paying full adult pricing.



Do your homework first. What variables must you consider?

- Where is everyone on the food choice continuum in your community?
- What medical requirements and food choices must be considered?
- How many people WANT to participate and is that enough to build around?
- How often will you eat together and on what schedule?
- How old are your kids? Can they participate in the workload? Will they attend?
- Potlucks vs Supper Club
- Serving family style vs buffet
- Amount of designated space and place settings for eating meals together
- Amount of seating and variety of possible arrangements
- Napkins can be cloth, labelled and reused, or washed each time or paper.



How will you handle so many unique Food Choices?

****Medical****

Celiac
Nut & Peanut allergy
Nickel
Stone Fruit
Dairy-free

Ethical - Health

Kosher
Dairy-free
Vegetarian
Vegan
Macrobiotic
Low Sodium
Paleo

Preferences

Gluten-Free
Dairy-free
Vegetarian
Vegan
Cleansing
Low Sodium
Onions, mushrooms,
cilantro, celery, etc, etc.

****We always respect all Medical Requirements.****

We do our best to accommodate the rest.

Like everything in community it takes communication!



9 families - 17 adults - 11 kids

Our Unique Meal Program Design

MISSION: Every meal must be delicious and nutritious for all.

- We value full participation, no bookkeeping, and trust that over the long haul the costs and effort balance out.
- Everyone is assigned to a meal team and participates in the work load.
- Everyone attends the meals as they are able.
- We cook for more than necessary to be ready for unexpected guests. Meals are an extension of our home. So everyone is always welcome, even if not RSVP'd.
- There is a late-plate option. This is not the same as leftovers.
- The cook decides if they keep any leftovers or make them available.
- We eat together 3x week: M-W-F then Sun-Tu-Th. This means no one with a certain night commitment misses more than once every two weeks.
- 3 person **Teams**: 1 lead with 2 assistants
 - **Lead** - sets menu, shops and pays for food and cooks main dish
 - **Assistants** - come one hour before to help with table setting, salad, bread, whatever is asked AND stays afterwards to do all clean-up, about an hour.
- We use a FaceBook Event for **RSVPs** so the menu is announced and folks can indicate guests or late plate needs.
- We have a team that designs an 18 week rotation based on input from everyone on their schedules. This enables individuals to be able to work with different people over time and accomodate our changing schedules.
- Within a rotation, if I can't make a scheduled slot it's on me to find a substitute.



**When we moved-in June 2016
We were ready to go...**

**Everyone loves the meal program ...
Simple soup or 5-course fine dining.**





Easy Modular Meals

Baked Potato Bar

Burrito Bar

Salad Bar

Bibimbap

Pizza

Fix what you know...

Chili & Corn Bread

Spaghetti

Macaroni & Cheese

Soups & Sandwiches

Community Thanksgiving



If not everyone will participate - now what? OR Adaptations for Larger Communities...

First - do your homework, internally with your members and externally in the greater cohousing community. There's a lot of wisdom out there. And there's more than one "right answer".

Visit other communities and eat with them if you can.

How many people/households do you have that are excited to participate?

How often do they want to eat together?

How often do they want to work on a team?

Create a supper club with those who want to participate. Design it based on your numbers, how often you'll do meals and how many weeks the rotation will be. Folks opt-in for a single rotation cycle. Then start over with a new opt-in. Rinse & Repeat...adapting with each rotation.



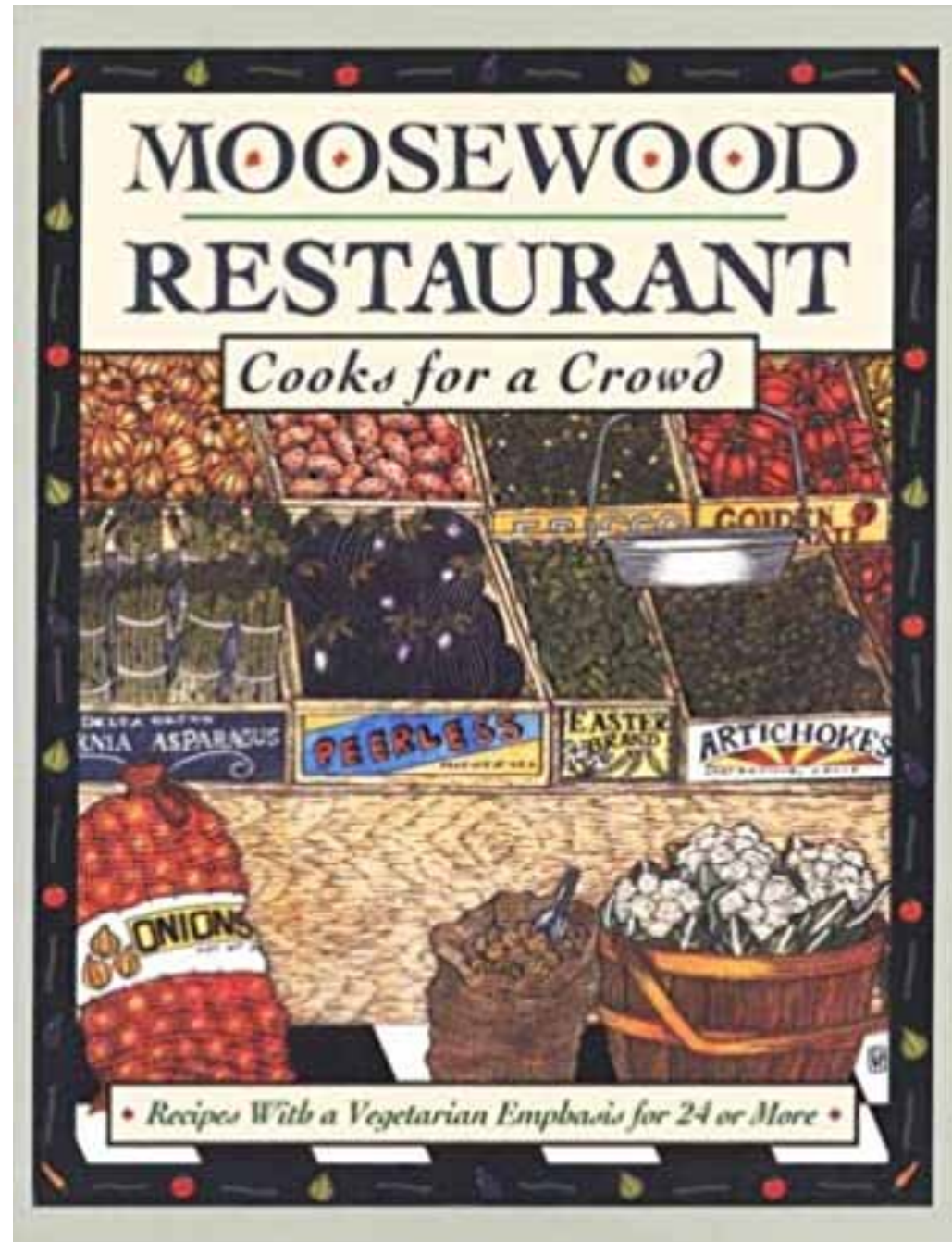


COVID Meals in the Summertime

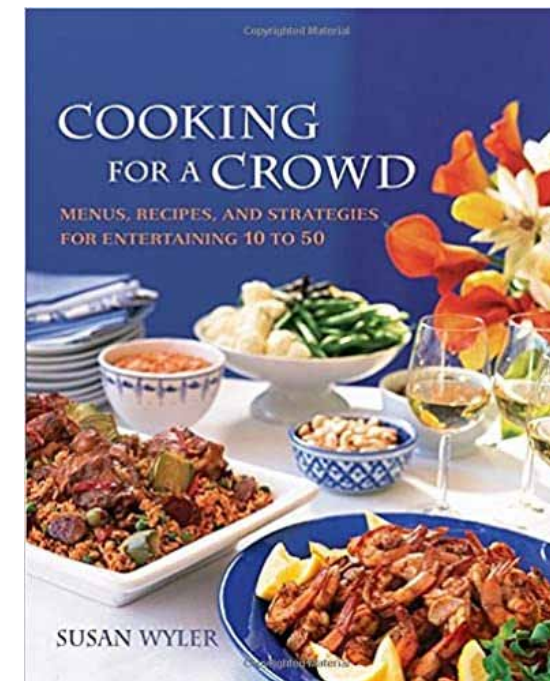


COVID Meals as the weather changes...

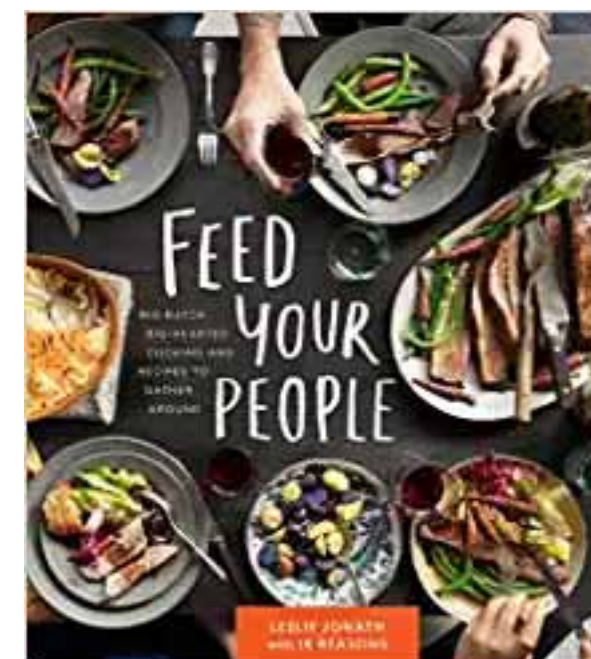
Cookbooks for Crowds



Moosewood Restaurant Cooks for a Crowd: Recipes With a Vegetarian Emphasis for 24 or More



Cooking for a Crowd: Menus, Recipes, and Strategies for Entertaining 10 to 50
by Susan Wyler



Feed Your People: Big-Batch, Big-Hearted Cooking and Recipes to Gather Around by Leslie Jonath

Resources



CoHo US

- *Common Meals in Cohousing Communities*
<https://www.cohousing.org/common-meals-in-cohousing-communities/>
- *Joani Blank on Common Meals: Part 1 & 2*
<https://www.cohousing.org/joani-blank-on-common-meals-part-1/>
- *Unique Meal Program Approach called “Brilliant”! (basis of this talk)*
<https://www.cohousing.org/unique-meal-program-approach-called-brilliant/>

Communities Magazine Article by Joani Blank: <https://bit.ly/3738wIE>

CoHo-L List Serve

- <http://lists.cohousing.org/archives/cohousing-l/msg42573.html>

Visit and/or Interview Other Communities using the CoHo US Directory

- https://www.cohousing.org/directory/wpbdp_category/comm/

Recipe Websites

- All Recipes - can search on ingredients, limitations, etc
<https://www.allrecipes.com/>
- Recipe Converter - <https://mykitchencalculator.com/>



info@CapitolHillUrbanCohousing.org