

Instructions for Organizing a Simple Meal

WHY A RIGHT-SHARING SIMPLE MEAL?

The Right Sharing Simple Meal is about mindfulness, calling us to be mindful of our abundance and to share our bounty with others in a way that is rightly ordered. It is an outward expression of the Divine center within us, putting our faith into action. The Simple Meal raises awareness of how we live, and how our use of resources impacts the ways our fellow humans are able to use resources. Sponsoring a Simple Meal reminds Friends "To live simply so others may simply live" and gives us an opportunity to perceive and follow urgings of the Holy Spirit.

The Simple Meal is served specifically to raise consciousness of hunger throughout the world. In many places, including some close by us, people do not have a choice of what or how much they eat. Watery soup or gruel may be all that is available. In contrast, most of us do have choices, abundant choices, in what and how much we eat. The Simple Meal calls us to awareness of the following realities:

- Our plentiful food and abundant resources are more God's blessings than our own doing.
- Others we share the planet with suffer from insufficient food and minimal resources, partly because of the demands of "First World" lifestyles.
- Smaller portions of nutritious food are sufficient, tasty and friendly to the Earth.
- A little sharing goes a long way-through Right Sharing grants, the minimal cost of this meal provides support for microenterprise groups (mostly women) in countries like India and Kenya, leading those involved to self-sufficiency and sustainability.

The Simple Meal is also about building community. Organizing and sharing the meal can be purposeful as well as fun, and a number of monthly meetings hold annual Simple Meals to benefit Right Sharing programs. Through faithfully living out our testimonies as a Meeting, we corporately acknowledge the Light within all God's creatures.

THE SIMPLE MEAL

Two kinds of vegetarian soup (usually one vegetable and one bean)

Loaves of homemade bread

A beverage

Fruit

Suggested charge is \$4.00 (can be adjusted). Because volunteers donate all items, the total amount goes to Right Sharing.

Simple Meals can be done as Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly Meeting activities, adjusting logistics and preparation to fit location and number of participants.

Basics - A soup recipe is selected by the organizing group. Friends are encouraged not to have many different kinds of soup-a *simple* meal requires that diners have few, if any, choices and that portions be sufficient but no more. Make several copies of the recipe, and on each copy highlight one line. The person who takes that copy will bring that particular ingredient or vegetable-cleaned, cut up (diced, etc.)-on the appointed day to the appointed place. Some people volunteer to cook the soup, and some volunteer to serve it. Other volunteers make bread and bring fruit. Still others set the tables and clean up. People are not reimbursed for their food contributions.

Publicity - Be sure your Meeting (or whatever group) knows well in advance of the event. Involving everyone, including children, has greater meaning than if only a few do it all. Using the newsletter is encouraged.

Significance - Prior to the Simple Meal, First Day teachers should offer lessons on the themes of equality, hunger, poverty, stewardship, sustainable environment, etc. To open the event, if you haven't done it as a group yet, read aloud "Why a Right-Sharing Simple Meal?"

Sample Procedures/Tips from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

(Approximately 15 RSWR members prepare the food and serve 300-350 people.)

1. **Displays** - Set up a clothesline of posters about AFSC, UNICEF and similar organizations; put out a display about the work of the RSWR program or similar local groups. Proceeds from the Simple Meal are given to RSWR or a specified local organization.
2. **Publicity** - Write an article for the newsletter. Put a notice of the Simple Meal in the daily bulletin. Give a short presentation at the close of the morning session, immediately before the meal. Use a sandwich board to advertise the Meal.
3. **Soups/Bread** - Two different vegetarian soups are offered along with bread made by committee members or volunteers from their respective meetings.
4. **Preparation** - The soups are made ahead of time and brought in huge pots to Yearly Meeting to be heated the day of the meal. While some people heat the soup, others set tables, wash fruit, and put out the stand-up cards about the Simple Meal on the tables. Others bring cutting boards and knives and receive, cut and arrange the bread. Others bring plastic

- soup bowls and soup spoons-large trash bags are put out, clearly marked to indicate the plastic will be recycled by the Meeting; plastic bowls and utensils are taken home, washed and stored for the next Simple Meal. Only paper napkins are thrown away.
5. **Leftovers** - After the meal, leftover bread and soup are sold. Individuals bring large glass or plastic jars/tubs with lids in which to put the soup. Proceeds benefit whichever organization is the specified recipient of the day. Usually soup is still left over and taken to the nearest shelter.
 6. **Clean-Up** - We bring all our own clean-up materials. Everyone helps since the dining room is used again for the evening meal.
 7. **Time** - The entire process takes approximately five hours.

RSWR SIMPLE MEAL RECIPES

BEAN CHOWDER (serves 20)

Ingredients:

3 lb. beans (chili beans cook faster but any kind will work)
2 tsp. salt
2 cups potatoes, diced
1 cup onions, chopped
2 cups tomatoes, stewed (optional)
2 cups green pepper, chopped
1 tbsp. flour
2 tbsp. oil

Soak the beans overnight. Drain, cover with water* and bring to a rolling boil. Turn heat down and simmer 30 minutes.
Add salt, potatoes, and onions, cook another 30 minutes.
Add tomatoes and peppers, cook over low heat for 15 minutes.
Add flour and oil to thicken.
Can be served with chopped parsley garnish.

*Throughout, use sufficient water not to burn the ingredients but keep soup at a thick consistency since it will be served as an entree over rice. If needed, additional water can be added when reheated.

VEGETABLE SOUP (makes about 4 gallons)

Ingredients:

4 cups celery, simmered in 1 cup water and 1tbsp. oil
1 head cabbage, steamed in small amount of water and 1 bay leaf
2 cups sweet red peppers, simmered in a cup of water and 1 tbsp. oil
4 cups rutabagas (turnips)
4 large onions
4 cloves garlic, simmered (with onions) in 2 tbsp oil and 1 cup water.

4 cups carrots
1 medium eggplant, sauteed in oil
4 cups zucchini
4 cups yellow squash
8 cups tomatoes, crushed
4 cups string beans
4 cups peas, added (with string beans) when soup is heated

1 lb. brown rice, cooked, kept warm and added during the last 15 minutes of cooking

Chop or dice each vegetable into small pieces and cook separately until just tender. Combine all ingredients including the cooking water of each batch of vegetables and bring to a simmer, seasoning with salt, basil, bay leaf, or other herbs and spices as desired. Heat soup slowly, stirring frequently. Substitute or add vegetables as desired.

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ORGANIZING SIMPLE MEALS

For ADULTS - In Adult Forum or discussion groups:

Read and discuss two articles in the June, 1999 issue of *Friends Journal*:

1. "Quaker Testimonies and the Third World, An Interview with Marc Forget," by Hope Luder
 2. "Our Testimony against Recreations," by Mark S. Cary
- or other pertinent writings.

Discuss the purpose of the simple meal. The meal is more to make us think about the issues of hunger, economic inequities in the world, and our own tendencies to consume more than we need than to raise money to share with poor people (although this is also a goal).

For CHILDREN

A skit with a "monkey trap" - a jar containing a hard fruit or a ball. The mouth of the jar is wide enough for an empty hand to enter it, but too narrow for a hand clenched around the fruit or ball. One leader may pretend to be the monkey discovering the trap and reaching for the fruit, then panicking as the "hunter" approaches, but refusing to let go of the fruit. Audience participation should be encouraged by asking "Oh, what can I do?"

With younger children, ask if there was ever a time when demanding something, or refusing to let go of it, caused problems for them. If the group is large, it would be good to have them draw a picture of the incident rather than allowing each child to tell a long story. Conclude the session by telling them that there will be a Simple Meal and that everyone is going to practice letting go of things by letting go the idea that we have to eat a rich dinner with dessert every night.

Answer questions like "What if I'm hungry?" "What if I don't like it?" by saying that withstanding a little discomfort can make them stronger, and if they're really uncomfortable, their parents will help them.

With older children, discuss the symbolism of the monkey trap as it relates to consumerism. It would be good to emphasize that, spiritually speaking, consumerism is a dangerous trap because it diverts our attention from God. If the group seems ready, they might try to identify the "fruits" which keep their own hands in the jar. As with the younger children, explain that the Simple Meal is to be a group effort at letting go. It's much easier to let go when we have the support of a group of friends.

EXTENDING THE CONCEPT

(if you want to use more than one session)

As an opener, go around the group with each person speaking briefly about "a time when someone wouldn't share with me." Remind the children to be brief! If the group is large, this can take half an hour, which is too long for many young children. In this case, perhaps only a few children will speak instead of inviting all of them to do so.

Invite the children to draw pictures (or use other art media) expressing their feelings when someone won't share.

Ask if there was a time when they refused to share, and why. If the group is large, it would be a good idea to break into small groups of 3 or 4 for this exercise. Ask one person to list reasons for not sharing.

Make a poster showing that the richest 20% of the world's population gets 80% of the goods and services; the middle 60% gets 15% of the goods and services, and the poorest 20% gets only 5% of the goods and services. (Either the children can make such a poster, or the leaders can prepare it in advance.) Discuss why the goods and services are distributed so inequitably. Brainstorm ideas for sharing more equitably.

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