

How To Do A Guerilla Sharing

by a Food Not Bombs Cell

Food Not Bombs

2023

This guide is for anyone who wants to feed their neighbors.

How we operate:

Many food solidarity groups set up a table in a public space to feed people. We offer our solidarity & support to our FNB comrades in West Palm Beach, Houston, & elsewhere who are repeatedly cited by police for their sharings. We recognize that acting publicly in protest of draconian ordinances against feeding the hungry is an important & legitimate way of doing this work.

This guide is aimed towards a different style of sharing, one that is less likely to be disrupted by the state. We prefer to do decentralized, mobile sharings. We avoid unwanted attention & remove the need for the people we serve to come to a central location. We just go to where they are, pass out some plates, & are gone before the cops even know we were there.

Why we wrote this:

People often ask to get involved with us, & we are always happy to have more help! But honestly, the best thing that folks can do is to start their own cell, as close to their neighborhood as possible.

Centralized orgs can get shut down, co-opted, burnt out, or perish to infighting. A decentralized network of autonomous cells, communicating to share resources & labor as needed, is much more resilient. The largest blaze can be put out with enough water, but a hundred small fires can burn forever.

With that in mind, we wanted to write a guide explaining in brief how our cell operates, so you can skip some legwork in starting your own. You'll probably end up doing it differently — that's great! This is just a starting point for you and your friends to work off of. Good luck!

1. Identify a need/opportunity. It could be an ongoing need, like a tent city downtown or migrant workers congregating daily at the hardware store. It could be a symbolic one, like a picket line. It could also be an opportunity, such as a sudden windfall of perishable food that is in danger of going to waste. The important things are that you need to know where your meals are going, & when. We've done sharings of anywhere from 20 — 100 meals, & while the bigger ones take more time & people, the general process is always the same.

2. Gather your action group. Depending on the size of your sharing, 3 to 5 people are probably enough. You will need supply procurers, cooks, packagers, distro-ers / transporters, & a cleanup crew. Depending on the scale of the sharing, it could be the same people doing all of these jobs! Communicate via a relatively secure platform such as Signal & compartmentalize as needed. Try not to tell people stuff they don't need to know, both for security and simplicity. It's a lot at first, but it gets easier with time. We have found it particularly gratifying when our sharings solidify into recurring actions, & our cells into close friendships.

3. Find a prep space. Usually somebody's house is most convenient, preferably with a kitchen. It is also possible to do a decentralized potluck cook where everyone brings a covered dish. The main thing is that you need enough space to set up an assembly line for your boxes. We have even accomplished this in parking lots and public parks!

Or, simply distro ready-to-eat foods sourced from local businesses. You can skip a lot of steps entirely if you're just doing bagels & water. Dropping off at a free fridge or pantry is another option, if such a resource exists.

4. Gather your supplies. Checklist:

- To-go boxes (we like three celled containers, preferably biodegradable)
- Napkins.
- Utensils. May be acquired in bulk at no charge from your local fast food spot.
- Gloves.
- Bottled Water, & a way to keep it cold.
- Wet-naps & hand sanitizer are thoughtful additions.
- Other items like OTC meds, sunscreen, tampons, condoms, narcans, bug spray.

5. Cook! Clean your workspace beforehand, do the prep work of slicing and peeling, etc in advance. Delegate out the tasks so it's not all on one person, & time it so everything's ready around the same time. Clean as you go! Everyone should be wearing masks, hats/hairnets, & gloves if possible. Wash your hands!

Menu tips:

- Vegan is easier for food safety reasons, even if your group is not ideologically committed to it.
- Include a protein with your entree, beans being a simple & cheap favorite.
- Rice or potatoes or some kind of grain make for good starch.
- Green veggies for micronutrients & fiber.
- Fresh or frozen fruits are huge hits especially in warm weather.
- Don't forget dessert!
- Season the food! It's important to move past just filling bellies towards feeding the spirit. If you wouldn't enjoy eating it, don't serve it. However, spicy food should be avoided for the sake of sensitive stomachs.

- Consider excluding common allergy triggers such as nuts.
 - Mess is another factor to consider, cleanup is difficult on the street so overly greasy or wet foods aren't ideal.
 - Soups or curries over rice, with a side of potatoes & vegetables tossed in oil or salad, with frozen grapes for dessert are a favorite of our group. We are able to make large quantities at a time which makes serving easy.
6. Box up all of your meals in an assembly line. This is the most time consuming & labor intensive part of the sharing. Be generous & equitable with the portions. Don't forget to partake in the meal yourselves!
 7. Load up your boxes into cars & drive out to where the people are. If you have a good idea where to look, it won't take long to get out 50+ boxes. Take time to talk to the people you are feeding. Ask if their neighbors would also like a plate. If you do recurring sharings, ask your regulars what they thought of the meals & take their feedback into consideration. Don't take photos. This is for everyone's safety. Besides, hungry people are not political props or tools for clout chasing.
 8. Clean up your workspace. Leave it cleaner than you found it as a thank you for the individual or group that lent you the use of it!
 9. Finally, get everyone together & talk about what went well & what you think could have gone better. In Rojava they call this "tekml". The idea is constructive feedback, both in the form of self-crit & crit for each other. It's very goal-oriented, not to tear anyone down but to build each other up. Make sure to mention the good stuff too! The idea is that next time you do an action, be it a sharing or something else, everybody has some lessons they've taken from previous experience that makes everything go smoother. Plus, it helps to empower people who were not the main instigators this time around to understand how all the parts move together so that next time they can be a ringleader!

A Final piece of advice:

Your group should not operate in a vacuum! Get to know other mutual aid groups in your area. Volunteer with them, talk to them, share resources and info with them! Decentralization does not mean isolation — it means resiliency through interdependence.

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