

# Cooking for Work Parties

## What I've learned

- A sign up is imperative
  - have a deadline for signups, then start a waiting list
- Someone always shows up you didn't plan for
- There will be at least one no show
- Round up, but not too far up (3-5 servings, *maybe*)
- Have participants bring their own mess kit, then provide a way for them to wash dishes (saves a lot of money)
- Post the menu and meal times
- Sometimes you need more than the recommended 'serving size'
- Don't use a recipe you have not tried beforehand (I make it and serve it to people to actually see how many it feeds - then I enlarge it accordingly)
- it will take 2 days to get a good team going
- Assign tasks and then get out of the way, then you can '*take up the slack*'
- Cook crew does the serving, for consistency
- Serve ON TIME

## Dutch ovens not required

You need food that tastes good and can cook awhile. Stews and one-pot meals that you can cook on a camp stove are excellent choices. If you can use Dutch ovens to make side dishes and desserts, that is great. If not, figure some other way to provide sides & desserts.

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## Organizing your event

### Dividing up the work - critical jobs

- Breakfast coffee person

Coffee management is critical in the morning. Have 1 person make and serve the coffee, using 3 pots. One pot is ready, one pot is on the stove and one pot is ready to be put on.
- Water hauler

Depending on the location, you may need a strong person to haul you water every day for dishes and cooking. Work with your work party coordinator to manage water needs
- Wash station manager

They keep the water hot and clean for people to wash their dishes both morning and evening. Also make sure there are clean towels to dry dishes. About 5 gallons of water per meal. If you can have a separate stove for heating water and 2 big pots, that is optimal.
- Sandwich Makers

You need 2 people to make sandwiches in the morning, before or during breakfast. They may need their own table. Use a large roll of plastic wrap with a zip cutter, NOT sandwich bags. After breakfast, put the lunch components out for people to put together their own lunch. They get a lunch bag, a sandwich, and whatever else you put out (e.g. trail mix, fruit, cookies ). Help them the first morning, after that they will know what to do.
- Everybody Else

split up the jobs - breakfast meat cooker, pancake maker, chopper, dessert prep, salad maker. The same person can do that job every day, or they can switch off (cross training is always best practice!).

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## What equipment do you need?

- make a list, including all mixing and serving utensils
- if you borrow items, mark them or make a list, and return promptly
- **LABEL YOUR COOLERS AND STORAGE TUBS**
  - I label the coolers with EVERYTHING that's inside
  - Labeling ensures anyone can find things
    - Not just 'dairy', but 'cheese', 'milk', 'bacon', etc.
    - For food storage store and label by the day or by the meal: 'weds dinner', 'lunch snacks' for example
  - I have stored my food in a horse trailer, that works pretty well

use a sign up sheet with a 'drop dead date'

Plan to go shopping 3 times

once for non-perishables

once for meat (freeze it well in advance, except the first day's lunch meat)

once for produce and bread (day before or day of)

You will need help - a crew of 4 can handle a work party for 40-50.

An important part of my planning is to have a way for the kitchen crew to function as a team. Anyone can step in and help, because the planning has been done ahead of time. If a person has a job description or directions, they need less supervision. That's less stressful for me. That's why I make a Book.

## The Book

'The book' is made up of recipes and directions/times for each meal. I start with the serving time and work backwards, writing all the directions out in chronological order. That way, anyone can see what to do, when to show up to start cooking. See the sample 'Book' for more information.