

HOW DO I START A FOOD GROUP

I have been asked this question often enough to respond to it. Thanks to all who emailed me privately as well as the group.

I started with my group small, only 4 other people. It took us about 5 hours to each prepare about 12 meals for the freezer. Every time I did it, I learned a few lessons. I have also talked/taught other groups.

Here are the lessons I have learned.

There are many different ways to set up a group. One group, each member makes multiples of a dish or two, and then gets together and does a 'SWAP'. My advice to this type of group is make sure you are comfortable with the cleanliness of others members of the group. Also, the quality of food and willingness to adapt a meal for a picky eater (no onions, or peppers for example).

You can keep receipts to make sure that all costs are shared equally. It is normal that one meal can cost a few cents more than another. I had a woman who quit coming to my home because she felt that at \$5.50 per meal, I was 'obviously making a profit on friends'. You don't need people like that in your group.

My Kitchen - I like having people come to my house and make the meals together. It turns into a night out. I always have a couple of new meals for "tasting". The first hour or so, we do the prep work. We package the meat into 1# packages, chop and roast onions, blanch veggies, basically get everything laid out.

I order my Groceries online through Sam's Club since they will pull them for me which is a HUGE timesaver. I make everyone prepay a week before the cooking date. Prepayment is very important. I can't afford to get stuck with \$200 worth of groceries.

Each person has a workstation set up. I move my couches against the wall and fit banquet tables in my living room. I can easily set up 15 workstations in my Living room and kitchen. It is crazy but so much fun.

I have an area, next to my fridge with all the ingredients on it. I have the meat in my fridge. Taped to the fridge door is all the recipes we are doing with the directions. People take a recipe and then gather the ingredients and then return to their workstation to make their meals. Each workstation has a small basket (to carry ingredients in) along with a flexible cutting board (cuz they are cheap and everyone needs a cutting board \$1 each at most stores). Everyone brings a paring and chopping knife to use. They also have their own mixing bowl to mix things up in. I have plenty of Clorox Disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer.

I keep my kitchen sink full of hot soapy water. After each meal, everyone SHOULD wash up their bowl, knives, and cutting board and anything else they have used. This is a huge contention with some of the people. The just don't understand how dangerous it is to NOT clean thoroughly after each meal. I had to ban one bad slob. Better that than a lawsuit.

I had a member donate a large fridge that I keep in my garage and turn on ONLY for meal assembly sessions. I assign each person an area to keep their finished meals. It just does not take too long for dangerous critters to start growing in food. People also use the freezer. The freezer space is given preference for people who live the farthest away. People bring laundry baskets to carry their food home in.

I have about 10 chicken/pork recipes that are a constant on the menu (Yes I know, I will get them together and post them). I have divided the rest of my recipes into 4 classifications:

American / Comfort

Italian

Mexican

Oriental / Chinese

I find that somewhere between 2-4 items per category work well. I probably give more variety than I need to but I am only doing this every 3 months and so I like having about 15-20 different meals.

Clean up is SURPRISINGLY EASY. I have all the tables covered with paper. I literally gather the paper up and throw it away. While we are assembling meals, I have a large tote in the middle of the room and we use this as a garbage. Because it is centrally located, everyone uses it. When it gets full, someone will dump it.

It works really well to have each workstation be a team of two. Sometimes I have husbands and wives, other times it is friends, mother/daughter, best friends etc. It shakes down that while one person is preparing the meals, the other person is getting the ingredients for the next meal. It is literally just as quick to make 4 of a meal than it is to make a single meal.

I NEVER make my meals when I have everyone there. I get the leftover meals of the meals I have planned. Example: Dijon Chicken recipe makes 12 meals. I sell 8 meals so I make the remaining 4 meals for my family. It matters not to me if I get 2 or 4 of a meal. This helps with the economy of this method of food prep.

I have an excel spreadsheet I use to calculate how much I need to order. I will try to clean up mine and post a link to it here. Give me this weekend to get this done.

If you have questions about this, please email me privately and then I will post it to the group. I am happy to answer questions about this.

I started with 4-5 people and my group quickly grew. Have a thick skin, it is amazing how some people are. I am a single mom with an extraordinary job. I do this to help me cook better for my son and me. I could easily afford to go to a professional meal assembly place and don't because I dislike their fancy schmancy recipes. I was raised cooking from scratch. I feel that cooking is as much method as a recipe.

Once you learn this method of cooking, you can easily adapt your family's TNT (Tried & True) recipes.

I hope I haven't missed something. Again, email me privately with questions and I will post answers to this thread.

chat later,

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My website has a page of tips and tricks plus 18 original OAMC recipes. Download for free at www.firstusbusiness.com
If you have any problems downloading the file, email me privately and I will send it directly to you.