



THE DINNER PARTY

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in **The Dinner Party**. This program is designed to connect parents and their children through the experience of cooking together as a way to create more family time. The program addresses the notion that cooking healthful foods with your family does not have to be complicated or time-consuming.

One school teacher is designated **the Dinner Party Planner**. They will lead a group of up to 30 children (aged 9 to 12 years) through four weeks of activities. The first three weeks are conducted in the classroom and the fourth, culminates in the actual Dinner Party prepared by the children with and for their families. Through this experience, children learn many important skills: dining etiquette, writing an invitation, designing a menu, cooking skills to prepare the food, setting the ambience for The Dinner Party, sending thank you notes and reflecting on the experience. Parent volunteers work with groups of children to produce the dinner served to all the families.

The Dinner Party Planner coordinates every part of the event.

This role is pivotal because of the high level of responsibility it entails. Through your school's participation in this project, you join a growing legion of professionals in the education, food and nutrition communities who are committed to teaching the next generation about food and healthful eating. Given these goals, **parent involvement is equally essential**, because the educational goals of this program are to help change mealtime behavior of both parents and their children. Communing at the table as a family once each day is no longer the norm. Parent volunteers will be encouraged to restore the value around the family meal that is slowly disappearing in our modern society.

This easy-to-use curriculum guide provides step-by-step instructions to lead you through each lesson plan and your communications with parents, and other teachers and school personnel. There are also checklists, action plans, recipe ordering lists and more.

This curriculum is available from FamilyCook Productions. Contact us at via email info@FamilyCookProductions.com or 212/867-3929.

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The power of food is frequently underestimated. Our society has become a high paced environment leaving many of us in a constant time crunch. Thus food is often something we grab on the way without much thought to its nutritional value. Since our children are the future of the world, we want to enhance their knowledge of food and nutrition.

Food education teaches children that their well being, long-term good health, vitality, energy level and effectiveness are directly connected to the food they eat. They should also come to appreciate that preparing delicious and nutritious foods is a way to create community when sharing meals with friends and family.

Let's Get Cooking

The Dinner Party involves parents and children cooking a celebratory meal at school. This is a family opportunity for appreciating nutritious food, cooking together and sharing experiences around the table.

The Dinner Party is a first step, and one that promises many spillover benefits including more quality family time, improved lines of communication, stronger familial bonds and better family nutrition. Everyone's participation is very important to the success of The Dinner Party. Let's get cooking together!





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This project involves a series of lessons and homework activities that are designed to further engage the students in learning the key aspects of taste and healthful eating. The lessons culminate in **The Dinner Party** prepared and shared by children with their parents. A designated Dinner Party Planner (member of school/after school staff, PTA or outside volunteer) coordinates all aspects of the project including linking with school staff.

The project offers literacy support and family involvement to encourage family participation in values promoted through awareness of food, its relationship to health and family well-being.

Literacy Component



The Dinner Party project is designed to support and enhance your existing curriculum. The activities offer children structured opportunities to reflect on classroom experiences, write about these experiences and share them with parents in focused homework discussions. Through these activities the children discover connections between what they learn in school or after school and their family's food dynamics as well as food relationships among a variety of cultures in the world around them.

Each week, the children will be given a worksheet to take home and complete before the beginning of the next week's class. This worksheet is designed to reinforce the steps involved in the process of creating The Dinner Party. This feedback can include poetry and drawings as well as journal entries. It is a step-by-step process that culminates in a planned activity, a celebratory meal prepared by children for their families in the school cafeteria.

Step-by-step 5 week process guided by The Dinner Party Planner

1) Week One "What is a Dinner Party?"

- ❖ Discuss the sharing of meals with family and friends
- ❖ Design an invitation to invite their parents to the dinner party
- ❖ Homework sheet on meal sharing is sent home with students

2) Week Two "Designing a Menu"

- ❖ Introduce the Food Pyramid ~ the recommended guidelines for healthful eating
- ❖ Create a balanced meal highlighting three cultures (see bibliography)





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- ❖ Discuss safety and sanitation practices when cooking and review handout at home
- ❖ Homework sheet on balanced menus is sent home with students

3) Week Three "Etiquette"

- ❖ How do hosts behave toward guests
- ❖ What are good table manners
- ❖ What is the correct way to set the table
- ❖ Homework sheet on etiquette is sent home with students

4) Week Four "The Dinner Party"

- ❖ Meet after school to set up /prepare food with parent volunteers in the cafeteria
- ❖ Divide children in 3 groups each to prepare recipes, decorate and set the dinner tables, music, etc.
- ❖ Set-up cafeteria into an attractive dining environment, food served family style so all can enjoy
- ❖ Homework sheet on evaluating The Dinner Party experience is sent home with students

5) Week Five "Living The Dinner Party at Home"

- ❖ Discuss comments by parents and siblings about The Dinner Party
- ❖ Make a list of people to thank (principal, parents, donors, volunteers, custodian, etc.)
- ❖ Write thank you letters, address and send to all who helped
- ❖ Design a class photo-essay about The Dinner Party to complete The Dinner Party experience