

HOME COOK HEROES PROGRAM MEAL GUIDELINES

Thank you for considering providing a meal for our families! Coming home from the hospital to a home-cooked meal, made by people who care, is a real gift to our families. Please read over these simple guidelines to get started.

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HOW TO SIGN UP

1. [Read over the Meal Program Guidelines](#) for information about the Home Cook Heroes Program.
2. Recruit Your Team and Select **TWO (2)** dates (your first choice and a backup date) from the calendar on the [program's website page](#)
3. Fill out the [sign up form](#) on our website.
4. Once the form is received, a House staff member will email you a confirmation of your date along with a reiteration of these guidelines. At any point, you can ask any questions that you may have regarding your meal or the Home Cook Heroes program.

GROUP REQUIREMENTS

Size:

- We ask that groups have a maximum of 10 volunteers (this includes any children under the age of 18). This helps to ensure that each volunteer will have a worthwhile experience while having the kitchen remain a safe and productive area.
- If you have a group larger than 10 we suggest breaking up into sections (ex. preparation and cleanup), signing up for two opportunities on the same day (i.e. baking and dinner on the same day), or choosing two separate dates to come in.
 - Please note: We allow groups to sign up for 2 opportunities maximum in one month.

Ages:

- For every three children under the age of 18 there must be at least one responsible adult chaperone who is 21 or older.
- Children must be supervised at all times for their safety and the safety of our guests.

SERVING REQUIREMENTS AND TIMES

Occupancy:

- The number of guests varies depending on the House occupancy and the particular day your group is cooking. A House staff member will reach out to you via email to provide an approximate headcount within 3-5 days before you are scheduled to come in.
- If you have questions or need the information sooner, feel free to call us but please note that we cannot give an accurate headcount too far in advance.

Ingredients:

- Gift of Life Howie's House does not ask Home Cook Heroes groups to cater to any family or guest's specific needs based on allergies or dietary restrictions. The guests know to check with the Front Desk to see which ingredients are included in the meal. They can always feel free to use any food in our pantry if they cannot eat what is served on a particular night.
- For baking:
 - Cookies, brownies and muffins are always popular and wrap easily for freshness.
 - Please avoid or limit items that need refrigeration.
 - We ask that groups prepare no more than 4 batches of baked goods.
 - Examples of this would be 1 loaf of bread, 1 batch of brownies, 1 cake, and 1 batch of cookies OR 2 batches of cookies and 2 batches of brownies.
- All ingredients for each dish must be written out on a Meal Ingredient Form. This form can be filled out online by [clicking here](#) or can be filled out digitally during your sign in process upon arrival. It is up to the group whether this form will be filled out in advance or at the time of volunteering.
- When dropping off a meal/baked goods to the House, please always include a completed Meals Ingredient Form.
- No alcohol may be used in any food preparation or served during mealtimes.

Time:

- **Brunch is served at 10am** (weekends only) – groups may begin arriving at 8am
- **Dinner is served at 6pm** (everyday) – groups may begin arriving at 4pm
- **Baking groups may come in on off-peak hours** – For on-site preparations from Monday to Friday, groups can start any time between 8 AM – 12 PM and must bake and clean up within 3 hours. For on-site preparations on Saturday and Sunday, groups begin no earlier than 12:30 PM and must clean up by 3 PM.
- Any group may also drop off prepared baked goods or meals to serve. Please keep in mind for brunch and dinner specifically, to include the appropriate time needed to cook/thaw food so that the items/meal can be served by the times listed above.

UPON ARRIVAL/PARKING

- Gift of Life Howie's House is located at 401 Callowhill Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19123 (on the corner of 4th Street and Callowhill Street in Philadelphia).
- You may park in our free, gated parking lot (entrance located on Callowhill Street) and enter in the front entrance where you will be greeted by House staff or volunteers that will give you directions to the kitchen.
- Staff will provide paperwork for group members to sign in on, and the leader will be responsible for any additional materials given.

OUR KITCHEN

- We have four fully-equipped kitchen stations complete with 4 ovens/stove tops, 4 microwaves, and 4 sinks that groups are welcome to use.
- We also have all the dinner plates, serving platters, eating and cooking utensils, etc. that you will need for your meal, but donations of paper plates, napkins and paper cups are always needed and appreciated!
- We ask that if you have any equipment 'special requests' such as a specific type of pan, food processor, etc. that you bring the item with you just to be sure that you can prepare your meal properly.
- Coffee, tea, seasonings, and other staple food items are normally available in the House. Groups may call a few days before your scheduled meal to check on available items.
- **With required notice** during the sign-up and/or confirmation process, we have an outdoor grill that you can feel free to use in warm weather. The grill is filled with propane which is provided by the House.

MEAL RESTRICTIONS

The following foods are prohibited:

- Non-pasteurized juices and milk products (ex. Freshly squeezed juice, raw milk)
- Raw seed sprouts, such as alfalfa sprouts
- Undercooked meat, fish or eggs
- Alcoholic beverages of any kind are prohibited, including their use as an ingredient in any food or meal preparation.

SERVING

Gift of Life Howie's House staff and volunteers will reiterate how the meal is set up when you arrive, but please read through the following guidelines:

- All meals are served cafeteria style on the serving station along the main dining room windows.
- Plates, bowls, cups, and wrapped silverware are stacked behind the serving station. **For sanitation purposes, these items must remain behind the serving station.**
- We have all the serving platters and equipment you will need.
- All hot food is required to be placed in heat conducting containers/dishes (i.e. glass, disposable aluminum, and metal) and be placed on the provided electric hot plates to be kept warm throughout dinner.

CLEAN UP

- **The volunteer group is responsible for cleaning the kitchen stations and equipment you used to prepare your meal.**
- Whenever possible, items such as dinner plates, drinking cups, silverware, serving utensils, and measuring cups/spoons must be cleaned in the dishwasher. Larger items like pots, pans, and serving dishes should be washed by hand in the hottest water possible.
- Guests clear and clean their own dishes, so the volunteer group does not need to worry about waiting for the families to finish eating.
- House staff will put away and label leftovers so that they are properly managed.

GROUP CANCELLATION

- We completely understand the various reasons a group may need to cancel! We kindly ask you to respond to your confirmation email and notify us as soon as possible if your team is no longer able to support the meal. In that event, we ask groups to consider sending catering or pizza so that a meal is still provided for our families.

PHOTO RELEASE

- By participating in the Home Cook Heroes program, you grant permission to Gift of Life Howie's House, Gift of Life Donor Program and Transplant Foundation, and their respective affiliates, subsidiaries, principals, directors, agents, officers, employees or contractors to use and disseminate (with or without my name) any photographs, interviews, motion pictures, recordings or images of me regardless of medium, or any other record of this event in promotional materials, presentations (regardless of medium and including online or social networking websites), whether now known or hereinafter existing or for any lawful purpose and waive all rights to compensation for use of these images or interviews.
- Should you have any photo release concerns, please contact Gift of Life Howie's House Director of Operations.
- All group leaders sign a photo/media release waiver on behalf of their entire group.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Volunteer Illness:

- Many guests at the House have weakened immune systems as a result of their treatment and medication. Exposure to communicable disease represents a more serious danger to those individuals. **As a result, if any member of your group has displayed signs of illness within the last seven days, they may not participate in cooking, handling any ingredients, or volunteering at the House. Examples include signs of infection, flu-like symptoms, rashes, cough, or GI issues.**
- Please visit the US Department of Agriculture's volunteer guide to Food Safety, which includes additional information you need to know to ensure that your meal is as safe as can be for our families. http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Cooking_for_Groups.pdf.

Safety Tips

- While in the kitchen, please use good hand washing techniques before preparing and serving meals. All kitchen surfaces must be wiped down before and after food preparation. When cooking meat, please ensure the proper temperature is reached for food safety.
- Keep raw meat away from other foods to prevent cross contamination.
 - Wash and sanitize surfaces that come in contact with raw meat.
 - Use a separate cutting board for raw meat.
 - Wash hands after handling raw meat.

- Cook food to proper temperature:
 - 165 degrees F: poultry, hot dogs, stuffed foods and stuffing, casseroles, canned foods, all reheated food
 - 160 degrees F: beef, pork, veal, lamb (steaks, roasts, chops); ground beef (includes hamburgers and any dish that contains ground beef); egg dishes
 - 145 degrees F: fish
- All meat must be fully cooked. Once cooked to proper temperature, hot-held food must be kept at or above 140 degrees. Thermometers are supplied.
- Take special care in transporting food to the House:
 - Potentially hazardous food must be transported in coolers on ice.
 - Hot food that is commercially prepared off-site and transported to the House by the dinner group must arrive at the House within 75 minutes from time of purchase. If the temperature on arrival is less than 140 degrees, it must be reheated to 165 degrees.

SPECIAL NOTES

- Please keep in mind that guests you will be serving are presently experiencing a crisis in their lives. It is important to be empathetic and set a respectful mood while cooking in the House.
- No weapons of any kind may be brought onto Gift of Life Howie's House's property including any firearms, knives, ammunition, etc.
- Volunteer groups are restricted to only the first-floor common areas of the House and cannot enter a guest's room at any time.
- We ask that any volunteer who has never been to the House take a tour of our facility. By seeing all the different amenities we have to offer (ex. Activity Center, Library, Guest Rooms) we can give volunteers a better understanding of our mission. Front Desk staff can give tours at any time, but it is usually most convenient to take the tour after your meal is served.
- **No alcohol is permitted inside Gift of Life Howie's House gates.**
- If any group members are smokers, there is a smoking section towards the back of the parking lot. Smoking outside this area is strictly prohibited.

We encourage you to have fun in our kitchen while preparing a meal for our families. Here are some suggestions:

- **Have a theme and dress according to the theme to serve the meal.**
- **Bring props (i.e. Hawaiian theme, bring flowers for tables and/or pass out leis).**

As a general guideline, please consider providing the following menu items:

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| 1.) Main dish (it is not necessary to provide both a meat and vegetarian entrée)
2.) Starch, if not included in the main dish
3.) Bread/rolls with butter | 4.) Fresh green or vegetable salad and/or vegetable
5.) Fresh fruit
6.) Dessert
7.) Beverages |
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MENU IDEAS

The following are some ideas for meals but feel free to be creative. Consider healthier, lower fat cooking options like grilling and steaming and avoid deep-frying.

SAMPLE DINNER MENUS

- Bean Chili
- Cheddar Cheese
- Corn Bread
- Fresh Fruit
-
- Chicken Cacciatore over Pasta
- Sautéed Spinach
- Garlic Bread
-
- Pulled BBQ Pork on Rolls
- Cole Slaw
- Oven Browned Potato Wedges
-
- Chicken Noodle Soup
- Tossed Salad
- Warm Dinner Rolls
-
- Cornmeal Crusted Chicken Tenders
- Sweet Potato Fries
- Sesame String Bean Salad
-
- Hearty Smoked Turkey
- White Bean Soup
- Spinach Salad
- Warm Herbed Biscuits

SAMPLE BRUNCH MENUS

- Baked French Toast Casserole
- Turkey Sausage
- Citrus Fruit Salad
-
- Egg, Pepper, and Onion Scramble
- Home Fried Potatoes
- Fresh Sliced Fruit
- Bagels w/ Cream Cheese, Butter, Jam
-
- Broccoli, Cheese and Egg Bake
- Fresh Fruit
- Warm Biscuits and toast
-
- Breakfast Burritos
- Yogurt and Fruit Parfaits
-
- Multi-Grain Pancakes with
- Chocolate Chips, Bananas, Walnuts
- Turkey Sausage
- Fresh Fruit Salad
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- Cheddar and Chile Egg Casserole
- Side of Bacon
- Corn Muffins
- Fresh Fruit Salad

