

# FOOD COMMITTEE REPORT- A<sup>2</sup> 1988

The Food Committee worked out a menu by the fall of 1987, and passed it around the team for comment. Since most of the people who cared strongly about food were on the committee, we got little response except "ok!" The only major changes we made after that were to scrap Saturday's whole-wheat pancake breakfast as not long-lasting enough for dancers, and replace Sunday's supper's dessert with a chocolate one. We left Sunday supper's entree up to the cooks to decide. Enclosed is the menu we gave them, with the actual food served (what I can remember of it!) in red pen where it's different. Some items they nixed because of expense (AA cheese and fruit, for example) and in general their emphasis was to vary things like party food day to day, but cut variety at each particular time. Over the course of the weekend they continued to have ideas, some great!

Our goals with the food were to have meals that were fairly simple to make and serve, heavy on complex carbs (dance fuel), easy to adjust to veggie/non-veggie, tasty, reasonably useful as leftovers, and liked by everyone! We tried to make sure that special diet people, kids, and the unsatisfied would have some alternatives available. The cooks dealt directly with these people. Once we had a menu that everyone on the Food Committee wanted to eat, and checked it to see that people with common food allergies, etc., would at least not starve all weekend, we were satisfied. Though I notice that the one meal we didn't plan (Sunday supper) was the best one!

We also wanted to make sure that meals were on time and that the amount of time spent in line was bearable. We were motivated by experiences we had all had (not only at Morris Ales) of being cranky, exhausted and starving at the end of a long day of dancing, and then having to WAIT for food. We knew that was the kind of thing people remember about an Ale, and we were determined to avoid it. And we did! A good deal of thinking went into the two-tables/four-lines system which cut down on waiting. Meals were also planned to allow people to come in late and still eat well. This didn't work perfectly at first -- even though we warned the cooks to expect giant appetites, I think they were surprised at first! Friday night and Saturday lunch it seemed the food disappeared in a flash -- it wasn't until Saturday supper that we got our first really satisfying "trough feeding."

Our cooks were the people who run the kitchen at (U-M) North Campus Co-op (co-op meaning the students do the cooking and cleaning up). They were perfect for the job -- experienced at cooking tasty and healthy food, ordering supplies and arranging delivery, able to provide their own utensils and pots and pans (since the camp kitchen had none), and nice! They were Lisa Bardwell and Mike McClean, (work # 313-662-5969). We also hired two kitchen helpers who were experienced assistant cooks, Wade and Kary Motawi from Fremont, Michigan. This team worked well together, and they were a pleasure to work with. Both contacts were through the same person on the Food Committee, so to some extent we were just plain lucky.

In addition to paid help there were two of us from the Food Committee running things (I think this is too big a job for one person). Somehow our actions never seemed to overlap so there was no "two-head" problem. It worked very well to have a non-Morris dancer (me) to stay in camp



during tours and make sure everything was under control. Many wonderful Ale participants volunteered their help in the kitchen and dining hall, and, of course, Ann Arbor team members labored before, during, and after the Ale.

Some camps are all set up to provide meals with their own staff. Typical costs we got were \$15-18 per person, though these estimates might well have changed once they really knew the details. (Some sample meals were clearly cheap because of low nutrition -- we wanted the food to be GOOD.) The camp we chose necessitated a "bring your own" approach. The Food Committee did a lot of somewhat unnecessary work before we found our cooks; until then we thought we might have to do our own ordering, supplying pots and pans and paper plates, etc., and taking care of leftovers. So we had been checking costs and making plans, but the people we hired took care of all that -- within our budget of \$4,000, which covered everything but beer. It would have been very difficult for us to do this ourselves! It did help to know how much things could cost; for instance paper plates etc. cost more than we would have guessed, so when the cooks included that in their budget we knew how important it was.

Make sure your terms are clear when hiring your cook/caterer(s). If you decide to have no contract (besides seeming unfriendly and too businesslike in our situation, we didn't think it would help us in the event of a default) it's still a very good idea to write a letter summarizing your agreement so you'll at least have it in writing. We regretted not doing this when we found that the \$20 per person/expecting 200 people we thought we'd agreed to had changed to \$4,000 for however many people there were (up to 220). This worried us because at the time I think only 160 people had signed up, and we had to arrange that fewer people than expected wouldn't put us over budget, since their per person cost would be higher. (At 180 people it would be \$22, for example.) Also don't forget, as we kept doing, that there will be non-paying eaters.

From a cook/caterer's point of view, since the final numbers and appetites are unknown, there must be some leeway in the budget; a fixed cost per person is impractical. Give them the best guesses you can (we told ours that morris dancers' appetites would be somewhere between their regular students and the football team!) and keep them reasonably up to date on numbers (including how many vegetarians) as you go along. As it turned out, we knew by the end of the weekend that we would have money left over, so we paid our cooks extra, \$4,200. I think the final average cost per person for food was \$21 -- see the budget report for details.

Good luck!

Fae Fuerst