

Vision

Our tummies growl in anticipation of the next common meal. Our community thrives on the bonds that we form while preparing and eating common meals together.

Needs/Requests

Community members need and request:

- **Community/connection.** Spending time together eating meals, working together to prepare meals, enjoying the company of guests and friends.
- **Inclusion/security.** Meeting diverse food needs and preferences. Keeping meal costs affordable.
- **Ease** Sharing/reducing daily meal workload. Making the plan easy to participate in and administer.
- **Integrity** Honoring our environmental values by eating organic, local, sustainably grown vegetarian food, composting, recycling, and avoiding waste.
- **Personal growth.** Eating new foods and learning new ways of cooking.

Community Vision and Values

Our meal program supports our community Values of:

- **Cooperation and Friendship.** We enjoy sharing our time and tasks such as cooking and eating together. We work together to prepare our meals.
- **Environmental Sustainability** We are mindful of our impact on the environment. We serve and eat healthy food. We take advantage of community-scale opportunities to procure sustainable food. Shared meals and group food purchases use less energy than meals produced individually.
- **A Diverse Community.** All members find our meal plan enticing. Meals accommodate diverse needs around diet, schedule, and affordability so that all members are able to participate.
- **Safety and Trust.** Our policy is developed with input from the entire community. Sharing cooking and eating times builds community and trust. We feel safe with our sanitary preparation and participation procedures. If we've got an illness that might be passed on to others, we don't come to the Common House.
- **Consensus Decision Making.** Our meal plans are created by consensus. We value and include all members' input.
- **Balancing Community and Privacy.** Sometimes we eat as a community, sometimes we eat at home.
- **Being a Part of the Larger Community** We are mindful of how what we buy and eat affects what others around the world eat. We eat stuff that was grown outside of our community. We share our meals with the larger community.
- **Outdoor Spaces.** We eat outdoors sometimes. We eat stuff that was grown ...outdoors :].
- **The Interconnectedness of Life.** We acknowledge our relationship with our food and our place in the circle of life. We produce as little waste as possible. We compost and recycle.
- **De-emphasizing the Automobile.** Our bulk food buying strategies, common meals, use of food we grow, and purchase of local products minimize transportation impacts.

Overview

The multiple connections to our Vision and Values and the many needs it satisfies speak to the central role our meal program will play in our daily lives at CoHo. Our goal was to craft a plan with a strong foundation of ongoing, committed participation balanced with variety and flexibility. As you learn about the features of the proposed meal plan, we encourage you to explore what patterns of participation would work for you as an eater and as a meal crew member (cook and/or clean up). We will continue to tune the program as we see what works best for us after move-in.

Meal Types (A Meal Plan That “Suits” Everyone!)

Five basic meal types are proposed. After covering the basics of each type, we’ll compare and contrast them across a variety of logistics dimensions.

◆ Sunday Meal

The Sunday Meal helps to meet our needs for community connection, inclusion and ease by having a meal when we can all be together and making it easy to share a meal with visitors or friends. This low-cost all-community meal is held every Sunday with the hope that all CoHoots will eat together at least once a week. Menu is shared in advance. Sign-up deadline is Friday.

♥ Heart Meals

Heart meals meet the needs of folks who want a consistent pattern of meals with simple sign up and simple administration. Diners make a three-month commitment to eat and prepare all Heart Meals or a portion of the block (same days of the week each month or a combination of days reserved at the beginning of the cycle) and pay ahead on a monthly basis. Heart Meals are offered more than any other type, potentially 3 to 4 times a week (dinners plus a weekend breakfast). Initially, Heart Meals would be offered 3 times a week (2 dinners and Saturday morning breakfast). Menus will be shared in advance *when available*. A slightly lower meal price is charged as a “bulk discount.”

♣ Club Meals

Club meals meet needs for creativity in designing dining experiences that meet special needs and involve a shorter time commitment. Club Meals are organized by diners and then added to the overall meal program. Club diners collaborate to set guidelines regarding menu (such as vegan, humane dairy, ethnic, CSA box, 100-mile diet, all-organic, etc.), price, meal time, ability to opt in, Walk-Ins, length of meal cycle, and other logistics. Diners commit to eating and cooking for one cycle and pay ahead. A Club may exist for one cycle and then disband, go several rounds, continue long-term, or alternate time slots with another Club (every other week/month, etc.).

§ Wild Card Meals

Wild Card Meals meet the need for lots of variety and spontaneity. Wild Card Meals are offered on Friday evenings whenever a Meal Crew forms to organize one. Seven different formats are suggested and it’s even possible to have more than one Wild Card Meal on the same Friday! This is the venue to experiment and try something unique.

♠ Special Event Meals

Celebration meals help to meet our needs for community connection and ease by adding a meal to our traditional gatherings. Everything’s better when you add food! Special Event Meals for special events

are scheduled on an irregular basis for holidays, celebrations, work days, etc. Logistics vary depending on the event.

CoHo Ecovillage							
Comparison of Meal Types							
	Meal Type	Schedule	Meal Time	Meal Crew	Pricing	Sign Up	Comments
?	Sunday Meal Every Sunday, time based on community meeting	Weekly forever	6pm Dinner on Sundays (time adjusted for community meetings)	4 or 5 (size of Meal Crew can be adjusted based on sign-ups); great for folks who can't cook during the week	\$3/meal except \$4 on 1st Sunday to celebrate birthdays (includes cake/dessert)	Menu published in advance (format is "make-your-own" salad, wrap, etc). Sign-up by 6pm on Friday.	Ideally, this meal would be attended by all CoHoots every week.
?	Heart Meals 3-4 dinners/week and Saturday breakfast	Weekly for 3-month buy-in (minimum is average of 2 meals/week)	Dinners TBD (one dinner could start later); breakfast 8 to 9am (or ?)	3-4 folks/meal	\$3.50/meal bulk discount; \$4 if purchased individually	Menus may be published in advance when available.	Strong foundation of committed participation; easy option for folks who want LOTS of meals.
?	Club Meals 1-3 meals/week	Once/week for 1 cycle at a time	TBD by folks who sign up	2-4 folks/meal	TBD by folks who sign up (could be ??)	Menus published in advance.	Promotes variety. Folks could join more than one club.
§	Wild Card Meals Friday evenings Dine Out Order In or Take Out Parents Night Out Dinners for 7 Leftovers Meal Guest Chef Potluck	Offered whenever someone schedules a Wild Card meal	Times vary, set by Meal Crew based on type of event	Need 1-2 folks for smaller meals (Dine Out, Order In or Take Out, Dinners for 7, Potluck), and 3-4 folks for larger efforts (Parents Night Out, Leftovers Night, Guest Chef)	Varies, depends on meal type	Depends on meal type--see descriptions below.	Venue for experimenting. Could have multiple Wild Card Meals on the same night. Could invent more types of Wild Card Meals.
?	Special Event Meals Special Events (holidays, work parties, etc.)	Irregular basis	Times vary, set by Meal Crew based on type of event	Meal Crew size varies; may have larger crews so there is more time for folks to share in the fun	Varies, depends on menu	Menus may be published in advance. Sign-up deadlines vary depending on event.	Time to share special moments together.

Meal Plan Features

Assumptions

- Most of the food shopping will be done by pantry shoppers on Saturdays (plus a once-a-month major bulk purchase) Shopping for fresh or last-minute items will be done by the Meal Crews.
- Our meal plan software will be a user-friendly tool for meal scheduling, sign-ups (for eating and working), checking payments and balances, etc.
- Planning and scheduling for the upcoming meal cycle will start several weeks ahead. At that time (or earlier for long-range planners), most meals will be scheduled, menus set by Lead Cooks and logistics put in place. Then folks will sign up to eat and to join Meal Crews. Payments will be due at the beginning of the cycle.

Meal Prices

Pricing for age categories for ALL meals:

Adults	Full price
Kids 4 - 12	50% of Adult price
Children <4	Free
Guests (see explanation below)	25% more
Walk-Ins (see explanation below)	25% more

- Base meal price for Adults is \$4 (may be different for some meal types). This price is an estimate that we feel will be ample to cover meal costs. The base price may be adjusted down or up as we gain more experience in actual meal costs.
- Base meal price for Adult Guests is 25% more than base meal price (\$5 when base price is \$4). A Guest is anyone who does not live at CoHo. Guests can be signed up by host (CoHo resident) in advance, if possible. For those times when Guests can't be booked in advance, they do not have to meet sign-up deadlines for CoHo residents, but notification as early as possible is appreciated. Meal price is charged to host. Price is higher because Guests don't work meal shifts; frequent Guests can join the meal program, work meal shifts, and pay resident prices.
- Meal Price for Walk-Ins (folks who have not signed up by deadline) is 25% more than base meal price (\$5 when base price is \$4). Walk-Ins can be served if the Meal Crew decides there is enough extra food. Walk-Ins go to the "end of the line" so folks who made reservations are given first chance at the food. The expectation is that Walk-Ins will be relatively infrequent as more consistent participation supports the meal program overall and handling Walk-Ins can be stressful for cooks.
- For Heart Meals, the Adult price is \$3.50/meal. Diners get a 12.5% "bulk discount" off the \$4 base price because they are committing to purchase a block of meals for 3 months. The minimum block is two-thirds of the Heart Meals, which is an average of two meals a week. Folks not signed up for the total or partial block of Heart meals can sign up for a specific Heart Meal no later than 2 weeks ahead and pay the base price (\$4).

Payment

- Members pay into their meal program account before the start of the next cycle. Members' accounts are charged for a meal when they sign up for a meal or block of meals.
- Members can check their meal plan balance via the meal plan software.

Cost

- Actual costs of meals will be calculated to see if meal prices are on target. Meal Crews will turn in a summary sheet showing amounts purchased from stores, pantry "purchases" plus extra income from Walk-Ins and leftovers; receipts are required for reimbursement.
- For items purchased for specific meals (not for stocking the pantry on an ongoing basis), pantry shoppers will keep track of costs by meal.

Attendance**What If I Can't Attend a Meal?**

There are many options for handling meals you signed up for, and then discover you cannot attend. However, if you do not select any of these options and simply don't show up for the meal, you will not receive a credit for the meal because the food was purchased and prepared for you and that "cost" needs to be covered.

Take Home

Members can request a Take-Home plate for any meal[I'm reluctant to specify how something will be done before we have the procedure in place. I think that all we need to know at this time is that Take Home plates are available]. Meals (minus fresh items) can be frozen.

Swap

Members can also sell or give a meal away, or work out a trade with someone for a different meal, or trade the meal for other goods/services or not request any credit and simply consider it a "donation" in support of the overall meal program.

Cancel

Members who purchased a block or partial block of Heart meals can cancel a meal up to 2 weeks in advance and receive a full credit or cancel less than 2 weeks in advance and receive a 50% credit.

[I think that this level of detail (when to use the software) is more confusing than helpful at this point. I'd prefer to wait until we've written the software before we give instructions on when to use it (additional instances below)]

Meal Crews

- Self-selected Meal Crews will be created by signing up for a crew slot. Exception--Wild Card Meals just need to be staffed prior to booking the meal. The meal coordinator makes a moderate effort to fill work slots that are open two weeks prior to a meal.
- Meal Crews may opt to work together on all tasks or split into cooking and cleaning teams so that the whole Meal Crew does not need to be present for the full preparation, dining and clean-up experience.
- Number of Meal Crews you work is based on how many meals you eat.

- While you will usually work on a Meal Crew for a meal you are signed up to eat, that isn't a requirement. You may want to work a shift that is a better fit for your schedule or energy level.
- Each worker's number of meals eaten and meals worked is tracked and folks can check their totals.
- Meal Crews have some flexibility to set meal parameters but are encouraged to maintain basic consistency.

Food Needs and Preferences

Three levels of requests were listed in the survey of CoHoots food needs and preferences:

Level 1--No request for Meal Crew: I will take one or more steps, such as--eat the rest of the meal, or pick this ingredient out of a dish, or sometimes eat some of this food, or bring my own alternative food.

Level 2—Request some changes to menu that would increase Meal Crew's time/complexity <10%, such as serving item as a side dish so I can skip it, making simple variations of the same dish and leaving this food out of one version (like soup with either milk or soy milk), or serving alternative item purchased from store (like corn tortillas in addition to flour tortillas for burrito bar).

Level 3-- Request more changes to menu that would increase Meal Crew's time/complexity >10%, such as serving precooked portions of an alternative dish, or cooking a separate alternative dish, or using unfamiliar ingredients or procedures.

Diners can always take Level 1 steps at any meal. Meal Crews will provide Level 2 accommodation at all meals. Diners with Level 3 requests and Meal Crews are asked to check in with each other to figure out how best to meet Level 3 requests. For example, a wheat-free eater may offer to make a wheat-free crust for a quiche meal or give the cook a recipe so they can learn how to do it. (Based on data from the recent survey of food needs and preferences, it appears that many Level 3 requests will most likely be handled by food policies adopted by the community, such as deciding not to use MSG or trans fats in CoHo meals.)

A list of CoHoots' food needs and preferences will be available to enable Meal Crews to make accommodations based on who is signed up for the meal.

Miscellaneous

- Leftovers can be used at future regular meals or served at Wild Card Leftovers Meals or frozen if possible. Remaining leftovers are sold at 1/2 price at the meal. What's left is labeled, dated and tucked in the refrigerator. Leftovers are FREE after 24 hours.
- [already covered in "Attendance" above]
- Take-Home plates are assembled by Meal Crew after diners have been served and before seconds are available.
- Food is available as long as it is out.

Meal Program Launch

The best strategy for launching our meal program in October is still under discussion. We are mindful of the number of unknowns about logistics (such as when we will get the Certificate of Occupancy for the Common House), members' current energy levels, and the readiness of other projects that support the Meal Program.

We are anticipating a “staggered start” so as we “stagger” into CoHo, we’ll be able to “start” our wonderful Meal Program.

A Mock Meal Sign-Up Session (like a Mock Home Selection) will be conducted once the software is ready to get input from CoHoots on their expected levels of participation in the meal program and guide decisions about the meal program launch.

Parking Lot (Issues to be developed further when we have more data and logistics information)

Specific Nights and Times for Heart Meals

Specific Nights and Times for Club Meals (to be determined in part by those who decide to form Clubs)

Time of Saturday brunch in Heart Meal block

Staggered Launch of Meal Program

Meal Scheduling and Shopping Cycles

Training (format/content/timing): Equipment/appliances, safety/sanitation, Meal Program software, Meal Program forms, Shopping the Pantry, How to Organize a Club, How to Organize Wild Card Meals, How to Organize Special Event Meals

CoHo Ecovillage							
Comparison of Wild Card Meals							
	Meal Type	Schedule	Meal Time	Meal Crew	Pricing	Sign Up	Comments
§	Dine Out	Open ended	Varies	1 person Schedules event, sets sign-up deadline, books restaurant. Pays bill, turns in amounts to be charged to each household to the Meal Plan bookkeeper, gets reimbursed.	Depends on restaurant and what folks order. Charged to your meal plan account. Can use coupons saved by CoHoots for Dine Out meals.	Sign up through meal plan software by deadline set by Meal Crew.	Easy to combine with other Wild Card meals.
§	Order In or Take Out	Open ended	Varies	1-2 folks Selects restaurant and schedules meal. Sets up, picks up take-out, pays bill, cleans up, turns in amounts to be charged to everyone to meal plan bookkeeper, gets reimbursed.	Varies, depends on meal type. Charged to your meal plan account.	Sign up through meal plan software up to one hour before order is placed.	Could share Common House dining space with another Wild Card meal.
§	Parents Night Out	Open ended	Varies; could be earlier to fit kids' timing	3-4 folks Adults cook kid-friendly meal for kids and then babysit while parents enjoy a night out (slumber party for older kids?).	Varies, could be less expensive with a kid-friendly menu	Sign-up deadline one week in advance.	Parents might enjoy a Dine Out meal while kids are having a blast at Parents Night Out dinner.
§	Dinners for Seven	Open ended	Varies	1 person to organize small groups (6 to 8) to share a meal in a private home. Each host sets the menu and assigns guests to bring a dish.	No payment.	Sign up through meal plan software one week prior.	Could have 2+ Dinners for Seven with dessert finale for everyone in the Common House.
§	Leftovers Meal	Open ended	Varies	2-3 folks Revitalize leftovers and perhaps add some fresh food.	Varies, depends on how much fresh food is purchased.	Varies depending on timing of availability (if lots of food left from Thursday meal, sign-up is quick). Group size may be limited by amount of leftovers.	Helps CoHoots to avoid food waste. And hey--we eat leftovers at home, right?
§	Guest Chef	Open ended	Varies	2-3 to assist Guest Chef	Varies	Sign-up deadline one week in advance (or set by Meal Crew).	Adds "spice" to our diet.
§	Potluck	Open ended	Varies	1-2 folks set-up and clean-up (smaller crew if folks bring their own plates, glasses, silverware, etc.)	Free	None unless folks are asked to list the dish they are bringing for a theme or category potluck.	Could have a theme or sign-ups by categories. Could also combine with a Leftovers Meal.

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