



Nourishing community,
one dish at a time

Welcome New Cooks!





Introduction to Community Cooks

Welcome to Community Cooks! We're delighted you want to share your time, your cooking skills, and your compassion by creating home-cooked meals for vulnerable populations in your community.

OUR STORY

In 1990, Community Cooks co-founder Lucy Leu was raising her family on Westwood Road in Somerville where the neighbors were a diverse and friendly group of young and old. She heard that the Somerville Homeless Coalition was looking for volunteers to provide meals for their shelter residents. She knew she couldn't handle an entire meal on her own. Approaching her neighbors, they came up with the idea of joining together to make a meal.

Each neighbor cooked at home, taking on a part of the meal: one made the main protein dish, another a side pasta/grain, one a vegetable or salad, and one a dessert. Lucy coordinated and another neighbor delivered the meal.

Shortly after, Community Cooks' other co-founder Vicky I, who had known Lucy since grade school, moved to the neighborhood. She joined in and organized her neighbors using the same model, which they called Meal-A-Month. They chose this name to emphasize that by asking each volunteer

to commit to no more than one dish, once a month, the volunteer experience would be easy to handle and sustainable. This is the model Community Cooks uses to this day!

Within 10 years, there were 35 volunteer Cooks providing meals for three community agencies. Then in the 2000s as more and more people heard about the volunteer opportunity Community Cooks offered, the numbers grew. By 2010 there were 140 Cooks partnered with 8 direct-service agencies in both Somerville and Cambridge.

It was at this time that a small steering committee began plans for expansion. Community Cooks could no longer operate as an all-volunteer organization but needed to apply for nonprofit status and hire staff to manage the rapid growth.

In 2012 Community Cooks officially became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax exempt organization and in 2013 hired their first Executive Director.



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Community Cooks Today

Community Cooks envisions communities of neighbors helping neighbors by sharing food and nourishment and, in doing so, creating a more caring and compassionate world.

OUR MISSION AND PURPOSE

Community Cooks partners with existing front line, human service agencies in the Greater Boston area to provide home cooked meals for the vulnerable populations they serve. Community Cooks generates these meals by mobilizing individuals, businesses, and civic, educational and faith-based groups in the community to volunteer their time and cooking skills. We focus on supporting organizations and programs that, due to funding restrictions or lack of facilities and/or resources, struggle to provide food for those they serve. In contributing nutritious and much-needed meals, Community Cooks aims to:

- support agencies and service programs in their work with under-served populations
- feed our neighbors who might otherwise go without
- strengthen our community by connecting volunteers to those most in need

WHO WE ARE

650+ volunteers delivering home-cooked meals to **37+ community service agencies** that serve **1,600+ vulnerable neighbors** every month

WHO WE SERVE

Vulnerable neighbors at our partner agencies whose services include:

- shelter and support for survivors of domestic violence
- after-school programs
- addiction recovery programs
- residential and day programs for seniors
- shelter, housing and support for unhoused community members

Meals made by you and other Community Cooks volunteers support the work of our partner agencies by providing sustenance for hungry clients and creating a welcoming, caring atmosphere.



How Community Cooks Works

Here's how our **unique model** works to provide nourishment to vulnerable neighbors—including **where you fit in**.

Representing neighbors struggling with food insecurity are the agencies that are working with them. Whether helping someone gain access to housing, tutoring kids after school, or working with survivors escaping domestic abuse, these agencies are on the front lines providing crucial direct services. They communicate to our staff what they and our diners need.

Our small but mighty staff build the relationships with these partner agencies, responding to their needs, taking their feedback and recruiting teams of volunteers to provide meals for them.

Teams of volunteers are formed around Team Leaders. These are experienced Community Cooks volunteers who organize the monthly meal delivery for their team. Team Leaders are an integral part of the Community Cooks

structure. Your Team Leader is tasked with making sure your monthly meal is delivered.

As a volunteer Cook, you will be responsible for preparing one part of a meal and delivering once a month to a partner agency in Greater Boston. Deliveries only occur Monday through Friday. It is your Team Leader who will give you your assignment and keep your entire team of Cooks on track. Team Leaders will send you a reminder a week before your meal delivery and you will need to respond. Your Team Leader is the best and most accessible resource for you regarding your meal and the partner agency you cook for. Whether it's how spicy to make your dish, where to deliver the meal, or just advice on which recipe to use, Team Leaders are there to answer your questions. Feel free to reach out to them whenever you need help or advice.



CC sends email reminder to Team Leader 1 week before meal



Team Leader reaches out to cooks to confirm all are on board



Team Leader circles back to CC to confirm team is good to go for meal



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Guidelines for Preparing Meals

We'd like to offer some general guidelines to make your efforts as easy and as worthwhile as we can.

How much should I cook?

Usually Cooks prepare enough for 10-12 adults each unless your team's meal schedule notes otherwise.

What should I cook?

Your Team Leader will provide the parameters of the food needs of your diners, whether it's elders who need softer foods or teens who may be less inclined to "healthy" choices. Menu suggestions are based on direct feedback we receive from partner agency staff about diners' needs and preferences.

Please include a list of all ingredients used in your recipe taped to your dish or bag.

It is not uncommon for diners to have food allergies. If you do include a common allergen, such as nuts, it is crucial to include that on your ingredients list.

Please do not use alcohol or alcohol-based ingredients (including non-alcoholic beers and wines) in the food you prepare.

Some diners such as those in addiction recovery programs may have issues with alcohol abuse. Some diners might be children.

Pay close attention to dietary restrictions (as applicable) as some diners require vegan or gluten-free food.

If you are familiar with these dietary restrictions—or perhaps live with some yourself—please let your Team Leader know so you can be assigned a special-diet slot in the menu schedule.

Dishes should be easily re-heatable.

Please use aluminum foil pans (roughly 15" x 11" x 3"), the kind that are commonly found in supermarket aisles, to deliver your food. If your dish is a heavy one (meats, casseroles, etc.) double up on the pans, one inside the other, to make the pan stronger and easier to handle.

If needed, please divide your meal into two pans.

Two smaller pans are easier to handle than one very large one.

Use aluminum foil to cover a tray of food so it can go straight into the oven for reheating.

Plastic covers are fine for salads or sandwiches.

Seal dishes tightly especially if your dish contains a lot of gravy or sauce.

Spillage is a constant problem for our delivery people. For this reason, we discourage food that is 'drippy' like soups or stews.

Be mindful of food safety.

If you're making your dish many hours before the meal, please allow it to cool completely at room temperature and then refrigerate it properly.

Do volunteers have any food safety liability?

No. Both the state of Massachusetts and the federal government have laws that protect food donors to nonprofits from liability including the federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act and Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 94, section 328.



Being Part of the Team

Being a Community Cook means you are now part of an ever-growing community that includes staff, volunteers, team leaders, our partner agencies and, most importantly, the people who we serve. To keep things running like a well-oiled machine, we hope you keep these things in mind:

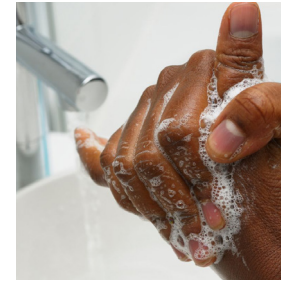
- Community Cooks is here, above all, to serve our partner agencies and their clients.** When making decisions about delivery details or meal preferences, we defer to their front-line feedback. Our **partner agencies rely on us to be flexible** in order to meet their ever-changing needs.
- Be considerate. **Do your best to be on time for deliveries and respond to your Team Leader in a timely manner.** If the Team Leader sends out a reminder and does not hear back from you, they will assume you're unable to deliver your dish and backup coverage will have to be arranged.
- Community Cooks staff is small. **Always reach out to your Team Leader first when you have a question.** They are our deputies and can usually deal with any issue or question you might have.
- Be understanding.** We know our volunteers have busy lives and are volunteering their time—and we love you for it! But Community Cooks does not have the capacity to provide customized volunteer opportunities. Our model works really well for a lot of people, but we understand that it doesn't work for everybody.
- Do not reach out to the partner program directly.** If your Team Leader isn't available, please contact Community Cooks staff. Our partner agencies are stretched thin; we strive to keep the process streamlined so they can focus on their important work.

Everyone's goal is to successfully deliver a delicious meal!

Thank you for joining our community and we hope this volunteer experience will be as rewarding for you as it is deeply appreciated by the people and programs we serve!



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Safety Protocols When Preparing and Delivering Food:

- If you feel sick or have been exposed to a transmissible virus, we simply ask that you **do not** cook and that you notify your Team Leader as soon as possible.
- Wash, rinse, or sanitize food contact surfaces**, dishware, utensils, cutting boards, food packaging, etc. before doing any food prep.
- Tie long hair back** before handling food. Wash hands afterward.
- Wash your hands** with soap and warm water for a full 20 seconds immediately before touching food, food boxes, or bags. If you touch anything other than food or food packaging (e.g. your face, mask, hair, clothes, phone, etc.), wash your hands again before handling food, utensils, or food packaging.
- We suggest using food-safe gloves** (powder free) to avoid direct bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. Always wash hands before putting on and after removing gloves.
- If you have to sneeze or cough while preparing food, please step at least six feet away, turn away from the food you are preparing, and **cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow**. Then please wash your hands again (and/or put on a new pair of gloves) before returning to cook.
- When delivering food**, please follow the specific instructions from the partner agency you are cooking for. We are working to honor the preferences of the agencies we work with and the vulnerable populations they often serve.



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New Cooks

Welcome Packet Acceptance

I have received Community Cooks' New Cooks Welcome Packet and have read and reviewed its contents.

New Cook Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____



NAME:
DATE:
AGENCY:

NAME OF DISH: _____

INGREDIENTS: _____

STORAGE & REHEATING INSTRUCTIONS (IF ANY):



NAME:
DATE:
AGENCY:

NAME OF DISH: _____

INGREDIENTS: _____

STORAGE & REHEATING INSTRUCTIONS (IF ANY):



NAME:
DATE:
AGENCY:

NAME OF DISH: _____

INGREDIENTS: _____

STORAGE & REHEATING INSTRUCTIONS (IF ANY):



NAME:
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NAME OF DISH: _____

INGREDIENTS: _____

STORAGE & REHEATING INSTRUCTIONS (IF ANY):

