

# Community Plate's Ten Tips for Potluck Success!

*Since 2023 Community Plate has hosted Story Sharing Potluck Suppers all across the state of Maine, and in the process, learned a lot about hosting a potluck. Here are ten tips for potluck success.*

## 1 Don't worry about assigning foods.

As host, you might want to make a main dish and a dessert, just in case, but usually, it all works out. Make it easy for everyone and let people bring what they want. And if everyone brings chocolate chip cookies, you'll just have a cookie party!

## 2 Invite people to bring food that is meaningful to them.

One of the easiest conversation starters at a potluck is "What did you bring?" You can follow that up with "Does your dish have a story behind it?"

## 3 Provide name tags.

Especially if the group is large, name tags help everyone introduce each other—and remind people if they're having a brain blank!

## 4 Let people know what they're eating.

Provide cards or slips of paper so that people can write down their names and the main ingredients in the dishes they brought. Place information on the table in front of the dish. This will help people with restricted diets feel safe and included, and let people know who to compliment if they try something they love! Bonus if you encourage people to bring and share a story about their dish!

## 5 Practice food safety.

Anything worth doing is worth doing well. Follow best practices, and support guests with information about safe food handling. We suggest a couple of guides that can be found on the FAQ of the Community Plate website.

## **BONUS!** Don't overthink it! Have fun!

The most important thing is to just do it. The goal of a potluck is to bring friends (old and new!) together to share food. Stories will follow—everything else is a bonus!

## 6 Small (and not-so-small) touches make a difference.

Cloth tablecloths and napkins, and reusable dishes, glasses, and flatware are great for the planet—and bonding over washing dishes can be another point of connection! We always include seasonal flowers on the tables—beautiful and easy!

## 7 Story or conversation prompts help spark connections.

Prompts can focus on food, family memories, or a simple thing each person is grateful for that day. Print them on table tents to offer scaffolding for conversation and an easy start to connecting.

## 8 "Attention is the rarest and purist form of generosity."

This quote from the French philosopher Simone Weil is key to successful hosting. Practice attention and generosity by having people turn off or silence their phones. This helps guests be fully present for the people in the room and the delicious food everyone has brought to share.

## 9 Express gratitude.

A gathering is a gift. Give thanks for the people who have come, the food they have brought, and for everyone and everything that played a role in bringing the food to your plates.

## 10 Collect and share recipes.

Recipe swaps are tried and true community builders. If your neighborhood or friend group is looking for a project, assembling a community cookbook is a creative and fun way to connect, and even raise money for a local cause or charity!