

# Dinner Volunteers



## Overview

The time between 5pm–6pm can be chaotic around Alpha House, just like it is in many of our homes! Kids are antsy and probably hungry and unwinding from their day. Likewise, many parents are returning from work and transitioning into evening responsibilities. Dinner is served promptly at 6pm daily and we rely on volunteers to prepare the meal, help serve, and clean up. If you are not needed to help with dinner preparations, it may be useful for you to engage the children in some quiet play or activity. Please check with a staff member or the Evening Host to see what may be needed.

## Dinner Volunteer Responsibilities

- Please sign-in at the front desk and make a nametag.
- Check in with the Evening Host or staff member and let them know if this is your first time volunteering at Alpha House.
- Prepare kitchenette and dining room for dinner by cleaning off tables and placing dinnerware, drinks, and food on kitchenette counter.
- Place food with serving utensils on kitchenette counter. Families serve themselves buffet style.
- When dinner is ready to be served, let the staff member know and have a child ring the dinner bell.
- Families typically serve themselves. However, please be available to assist with serving food if needed.
- Monitor the food and make sure enough food is available. If it looks like there will not be enough food, tell a staff member and assist in preparing food from the pantry, fridge, or freezer.
- Be available to retrieve items from the kitchen if needed.
- Make a plate for yourself and eat with the families. Relax and be yourself!
- When most people are done eating, begin cleaning up kitchen and kitchenette area.
- Rinse dishes and load them in dishwasher. Large items may need to be washed by hand.
- Throw away food that is old or won't be used and save usable (large amounts) leftovers.
- Please label, date, and securely store any and all leftovers in the kitchen fridge.
- Check in with staff or the Evening Host when you leave.

**Questions, concerns, ideas? Please don't hesitate to speak with a staff member, your Congregation Coordinator, or contact Heidi Beck, IHN Volunteer Coordinator!**

## Dinner Preparation Guide



Figuring out what to cook for dinner can be hard, and it's even harder when it is for twenty-some people that you have never met! Please consult the IHN Menu Format on the following page to help get you started thinking about what to prepare. This format helps us avoid having the same meal multiple times in a week but general enough to give volunteers flexibility in planning meals. The Dinner Preparation Guide will also help direct you in deciding what specific dishes to cook. We ask that you make something that is *kid-friendly* and that you like to eat and enjoy cooking. ***Casseroles or other "creative" food items are usually not well received.*** It is important that we supply our families with well rounded and nutritious meals, and it is very important to make sure that there is enough food to go around.

A few days before you are scheduled to prepare the Alpha House dinner, please call your Congregation Coordinator or Alpha House to find out how many people are currently staying with us and if they have any ***food allergies*** or other ***special dietary needs***. Eating together as residents, volunteers, and staff helps to build an important sense of community here at Alpha House. So remember to make enough food for the residents, the meal volunteers (usually 2-5 people), and a few additional people typically here at Alpha House in the evening (usually 2-3 people).

#### Main Dish Ideas (pick one)

Hamburgers  
Fried or baked Chicken  
Chicken nuggets  
Sloppy Joe's  
Pork Chops  
Tacos  
Fajitas  
Enchiladas  
Beef Stew  
Ham  
Meatloaf  
Hot Dogs  
Pot Roast  
Pasta with Veggies/Meat  
Chili  
Pizza  
Swedish Meatballs  
Turkey  
Stir Fry  
Lasagna  
Fish sticks

#### Side # 1 Ideas (pick one or two)

Veggie Platter  
Veggie Salad  
Fruit Platter  
Fruit Salad  
Fresh or frozen cooked veggies  
-peas  
-carrots  
-corn  
-cauliflower  
-green beans  
-broccoli  
Cole Slaw  
Green Bean Casserole  
Apple Sauce  
Sweet Potatoes  
Baked Apples

#### Side # 2 Ideas (pick one or two)

Baked Potatoes  
Mashed Potatoes  
Rice (brown, pilaf, fried)  
Rolls/Bread Sticks/Garlic bread  
French Fries  
Tater-tots  
Macaroni and Cheese  
Pasta Salad  
Shake & Bake Potatoes  
Cornbread  
Scalloped Potatoes  
Spanish Rice  
Roasted Potatoes  
Deviled Eggs  
Cheese and Cracker Tray

#### Beverages

Alpha House typically has plenty of milk and drink mix. You are welcome to provide other non-caffeinated beverages if you would like. However, this is not required.

#### Desserts

Desserts are not required and are typically provided on the weekend.

**Thank you for sharing your time, energy, and resources with Alpha House families!**

## IHN Menu Format

Breakfast	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	“Everyday Breakfast”	“Everyday Breakfast”	“Everyday Breakfast”	“Everyday Breakfast”	“Everyday Breakfast”	9am Hot Breakfast, or Everyday Bkfst.	9am Hot Breakfast, or Everyday Bkfst.

- **The “Everyday Breakfast”** consists of breakfast foods found in the kitchenette and kitchen areas, including: cereal, breads, oatmeal, milk, juice, coffee (please make), etc. The “Everyday Breakfast” will be put out on the kitchenette counter by staff at around 7AM unless a Hot Breakfast will be made that morning.
- **The Hot Breakfast** is, of course, a family favorite. If weekend morning volunteers are willing to make a hot breakfast, or even part of a hot breakfast such as scrambled eggs plus the standard Everyday Breakfast, the families will love you even more! A hot breakfast should be served at 9AM – brunches usually do not work well b/c young children are hungry earlier.

Lunch	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	Sack Lunch	Sack Lunch	Sack Lunch	Sack Lunch	Sack Lunch	1) Leftovers	1) Leftovers
						2) Pantry/freezer	2) Pantry/freezer
						3) Prepare at home	3) Prepare at home

- **Sack Lunches** are made for weekday lunches and are prepared the previous night at 9PM. The overnight volunteer and staff set out lunch supplies on the kitchenette counter and assist parents in preparing the sack lunches for the following day (sandwiches, chips/snack, fruit, juice box, etc).
- **Weekend Lunches** (and holidays) depend upon what food is available: Leftovers or food prepared from the freezer and/or pantry is the first choice. If weekday dinners do not provide enough weekend leftovers, the Congregation Coordinator needs to call the weekend lunch volunteers and ask them to prepare a simple lunch from supplies at home (fixed at home or Alpha House kitchen, such as hot dogs, grilled cheese, tuna melt, etc). As a last resort, sack lunch supplies can be used to make sandwiches, etc – but as you can imagine, having sandwiches seven days a week is not exciting. Note: freezer foods usually must be taken out to defrost the night before.

Dinner	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Main Dish	1) Poultry – whole 2) Pork	1) Beef 2) Fish	1) Pasta 2) Poultry – cubed	1) <b>Mexican</b> 2) Pork	1) Fish 2) Poultry	1) Pizza 2) Chef’s surprise	1) Beef 2) Pasta
Side Dish	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Vegetable	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Dessert	Fruit please	Fruit please	Fruit please	Fruit please	Fruit please	Anything is OK!	Anything is OK!

- **The Main Dish** listed is a recommended first or second choice. However, volunteers should feel comfortable preparing a meal that is not one of these choices (please consult the Dinner Preparation Guide for ideas). The primary concern is that we do not have similar meals several times per week. If a volunteer wants to prepare a meal outside of the recommended menu, please ask the coordinator first. Unless otherwise stated, meats can be whole, cubed, ground, etc. Please try to make meals that would appeal to all ages – especially kids!
- **The Side Dish** can be anything you desire, however, the more “creative” your main dish, the more substantive your side dish should be to safeguard against picky children. Feel free to make two side dishes! Popular dishes are: macaroni & cheese, whole or mashed potatoes, spaghetti or pasta, Tater Tots, baked beans, etc.
- **A Vegetable dish** is popular and healthy. Salads are kid-friendly and always welcome! Other veggies are fine as well (don’t hesitate to bring two veggies).
- **Desserts** are great – but if a volunteer wants to prepare a weekday dessert, please only bring fruit to help kids cut down on sugar. Whole fruit is great and can also be used for lunches. Fruit salad or fruit jell-o dishes are fine as well. Any dessert on weekends (lunch or dinner) would be gobbled up happily. ☺
- **HOW MUCH FOOD?** The Congregation Coordinator will tell volunteers how many people will likely be eating at Alpha House and if there are any dietary needs. If dinners need to be saved for families who have not returned in time for dinner, the Coordinator/Host will tell the volunteers how many plates should be saved.