

Planning a mid – winter dinner

Mid winter is a good time to get people together for a dinner and raise some funds. The tips below can be used equally well for a mid –winter lunch or to celebrate any other seasonal festive days.

Lunch or Dinner

- When making this decision consider the age of your parishioners and any other people you want to invite.
- Older people and young families often prefer lunch (no transport issues/can bring the children etc).
- Dinner often works better for working people.
- Profile who is likely to attend and this will help with determining the timing of your event.

Planning your event

- Do a budget.
- This will determine what you need to charge to cover your costs and make some money.
- Allow enough time to plan your event- this will ensure you have adequate time to promote and prepare for it.
- Draw up a master plan and allocate tasks.
- Ensure there is an overall co-ordinator who is responsible for overseeing the smooth running of the event.

Promoting your event

Think about the ‘channels’ you have available to promote your event. These can include:

- The Sunday notices
- The parish website
- Workmates/family/friends
- If you ask, friends will often undertake to assist with ticket selling. You can allocate them an achievable number to sell on your behalf.
- Others who have an interest in your cause outside of the parish
- Community notice boards and local shops in your parish area
- Consider your local community paper - you can talk about your project and include information and contact details about your dinner.

Costs to consider

- The food – do you want to theme your event?
- For example; a mid-winter Christmas dinner, a Sunday roast, an ethnic meal etc.

- Some themed events are cheaper than others to run. Consider the price point for your parish.
- When you have settled on; a budget, any sponsorship, and a ticket price plan your menu.

The drinks

- Are you serving alcohol? Ensure this is well supervised especially if younger people are present.
- Have a good choice of non-alcoholic drinks.
- Drinks are usually extra to the meal costs i.e. people buy their own, but it is good to include one drink on arrival.

Sponsorship

- Think about who may like to support you from the local community.
- If you are involving the wider community versus just the parish let your sponsors know when asking them for assistance.
- Sponsorship can involve the donation of goods or a substantial discount on any goods purchased.
- This can be particularly helpful in terms of meat and wine etc.
- Ensure you include your sponsors name(s) on all tickets and promotional materials.

The kitchen facilities

- Think about the cooking and food storage facilities that are available to you at your chosen venue.
- You will need to plan your menu with this in mind.
- For example, it may be easier to whip cream just prior to serving and keep pavlova s cool -close by- versus having them creamed in the fridge and using valuable fridge space.
- You may need to borrow microwaves to supplement oven space when reheating food.
- People living close by may be happy to help with any extra oven space and bring the food over prior to serving.
- Practice good food handling techniques.
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/basics_for_handling_food_safely/
<http://www.countdown.co.nz/corporate-responsibility/food-safety-tips>

Helpers

- It's best to split the tasks so everyone has a great night. People don't mind helping for a good cause.
- Draw up a roster with a list of required tasks and go from there to find who you need.
- Always include a couple of 'spare' people to fill any "on the day" roles.

The cooks

- You will need people who are prepared to cook menu items off site and bring them to the hall etc.

- Be cost sensitive. You can't expect people to donate large quantities of food. Offer to reimburse costs –as required- and you may be surprised with the amount of help offered.

The tables

- You will need people to set up and take down the “dining room”.
- You may want to decorate the tables or the venue. Include this cost in when planning your budget.
- There a number of websites which have good ideas for economical table decorations. <http://budgetdecorating.about.com/od/littlechangesbigstyle/a/Budget-Table.htm>
- You may need to hire glassware, crockery etc depending on what you have available. A simpler less environmentally friendly way is to consider using disposable plates etc. Consider this in your planning/costings if it is a requirement

The waiters

- You will need a hand to serve, plate, or put out the food.
- Your confirmed numbers will determine which is the best way to serve your meal and determine how many people you will require to assist with the above.
- You may want to use these same people to clear the tables at the end of the function.

The dishes

- You will need people to wash and clean up.

Entertainment

- You may want to have some music and dancing for an evening event.
- There are often people in your local community who are happy to perform, compere etc at no charge.
- It pays to check out their music etc before engaging them.
- Have want to have something to entertain the children if it's a lunch time event. Suggestions include supervised games, a magician etc.

Raffle

- A door raffle is an easy way of adding to your funds.
- You may want to run it locally prior to the evening also.
- Local business will often supplement your raffle prize.
- For example, gourmet grocery hampers which include a voucher for a Turkey or ham are good fundraisers at Christmas. You can ask people to contribute grocery items – it is best to provide a list of suggested items- and then top up as required. Pop the items in a basket and wrap in cellophane etc and you have a great looking prize.

Auction

- You may like to consider a small auction between dinner and dessert.

- Apart from goods you can auction services ranging from baking, gardening, baby sitting, use of a holiday house, to legal services etc.
- A lively auction adds fun to the event.

Debrief

- If you want to make this an annual event it's good to record what well for next time.
- What you might do differently.
- Keep a list of helpers names for next time
- Make sure you thank your sponsors and your helpers. A hand written note is good letting them know how it went and how much money you raised.

ENDS