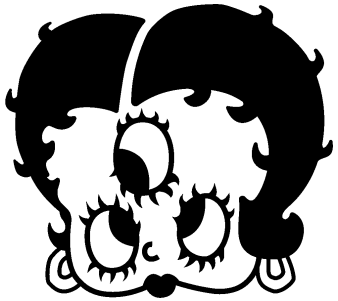


HOUDINI Magazine

10

Reasons to Run a Community Meal

Erik Houdini

Read it online.
Become a member.

HOUDINI

Today was Pizza Day, despite pouring rain our DSA chapter was able to serve 64 meals in Polk County Florida Today

I think mutual aid is one of the most effective forms of praxis, and I think doing a community meal is one of the most effective forms of mutual aid for small groups.



Read more

East Bay Food Not Bombs, Operator's Manual (1996)

East Bay Food Not Bombs, 2nd Edition (2000)

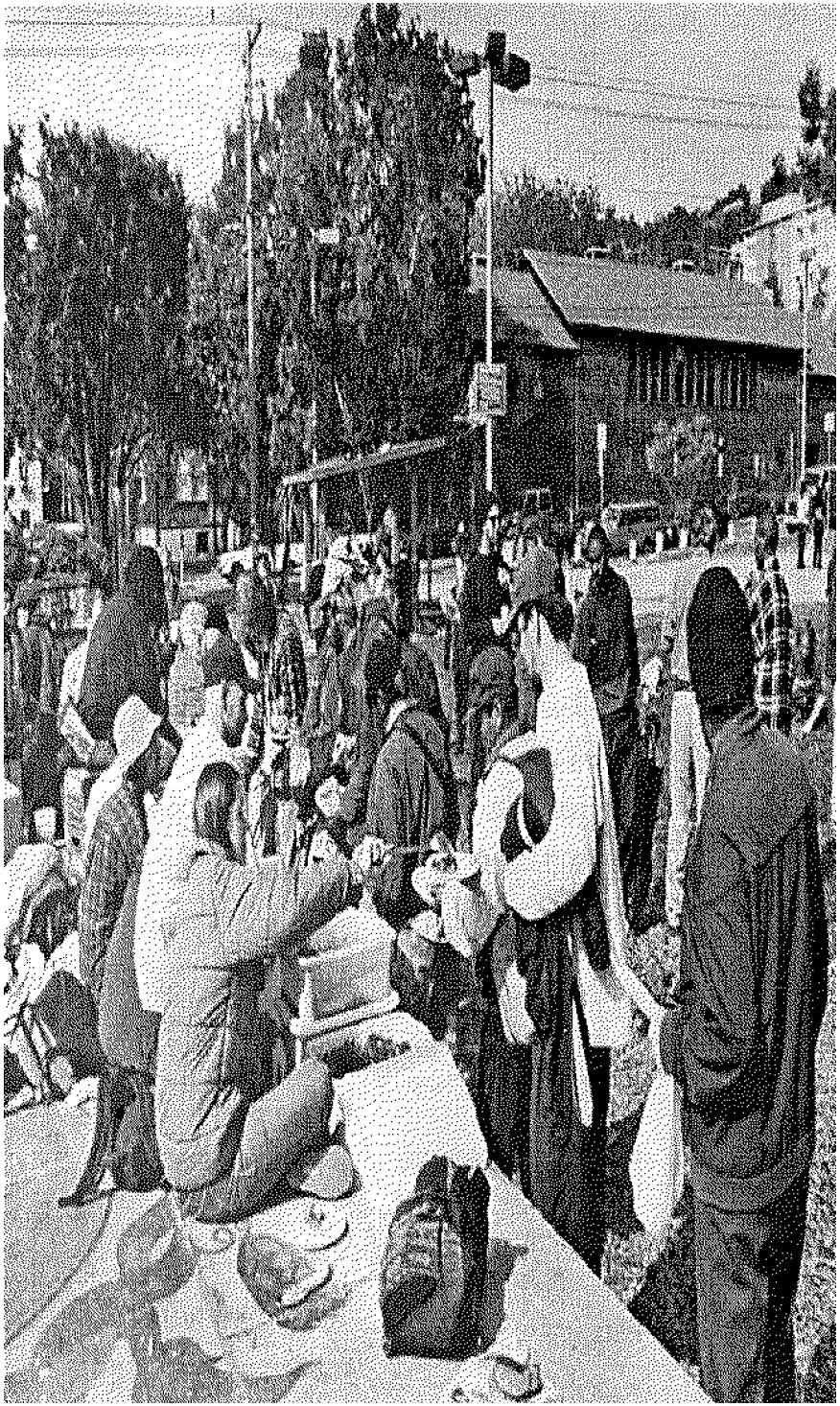
Kropotkin, Mutual Aid (1902)

Black Panther Party, Free Breakfast (1969)

Photographs and the fist and carrot drawing from East Bay Food Not Bombs, 2nd Edition (2000), by Lydia Gans and Cary Karacas.

10

It's simply the right thing to do. People go hungry, we have the means to feed them, we are socialists, organizers, and we have a duty to support our fellow workers.



Don't compete! Competition is always injurious to the species, and you have plenty of resources to avoid it!

Therefore combine. Practise mutual aid!

Peter Kropotkin
Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution, 1902

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8 It feeds your people. No army in the world has existed without cooks, without kitchen duty. The food share isn't just a means to feed the people, it's the means to feed your group, chapter, org, etc. It's a chance to regroup and share a meal with your comrades, just as much as it is praxis. You'll grow fond of certain member's cooking, certain dishes, pizza day will become an event in its own right.

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9 It opens your org up to other branches in the skill tree. A single meal share in the park is the baseline, it's not a long jump to organizing groceries for families, clothing donations, or support for new parents (ie baby formula). It won't be long before a co-worker, a friend or a simply a fellow worker asks you something like "I know you're with that group that does the meals in the park, we're really down bad and could use some groceries, can you help?"



FNB is more than a soup kitchen. It's more than a social service program. It's more than charity. FNB is community.

Marcus, East Bay Food Not Bombs, 2nd Edition, 2000

1

It gives the people who participate a boost mentally, emotionally, dare I say spiritually. It's pure unalienated labor, you cook the food, you serve the food, you feel the energy of doing something. It is a huge morale booster to do this type of thing.

2

Everyone will appreciate this type of work. You're feeding the people, it gives you a serious bit of 'clout' for a lack of a better word. No one can argue against someone who does this, and it aligns with Christ's teachings which appeals to the christian culture of Americans.

3

It gives you a chance to organize around logistics. Who's providing the plates? The disposable casserole tins? Can people show up on time? Is there enough people to make it happen? It gives a lot of questions that when answered, become useful in other contexts.



We are a collective sharing food among ourselves and the greater community. We sit and eat with the people who we serve, and recruit helpers from among them.

East Bay Food Not Bombs, 2nd Edition, 2000

Food Not Bombs is "a practical act of sustaining people and organizations."

East Bay Food Not Bombs, 2nd Edition, 2000

"An example of an alternative institution which could replace functions of the existing system."

East Bay Food Not Bombs, Operator's Manual, 1996

6 It gives you a way to go to the people. While you'd think that it's just feeding the homeless, you'll quickly find everyone from retirees to children in your line. You'll start to know people, you'll hear about what people struggle with. Is someone who works at 7-Eleven but still needs the meal not the working class we seek to uplift? To bring class consciousness to?

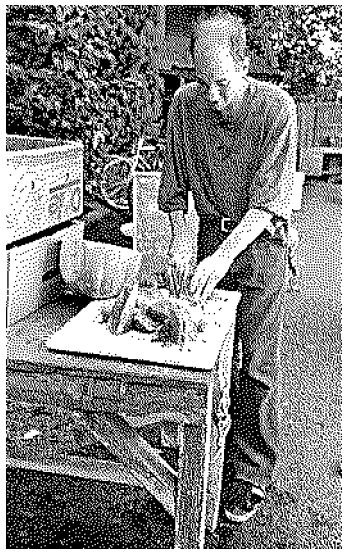
7 A community meal is more than just a meal shared in the park. All of the logistics can be repurposed for other means. Imagine it's July 4th, and you've hosted a punk show to raise money for those imprisoned by ICE. You can literally just set up your food share at the show, every filled belly that didn't have to pay $30 in concessions is a potential recruit.

"Our children need a nourishing breakfast every morning so that they can learn."

Black Panther Party
The Black Panther, March 26, 1969
Free Breakfast for School Children

4 It gives you outreach potential. Our chapter is going to be putting out donation boxes soon. That means talking to bartenders (and management), as well as cafes, and other 'third spaces' we want to place these. Every box has the word "Socialist" on it. Every relationship matters for later, for example: the bar you have a donation box might grow towards being the bar you host events at.

5 When held in a public space (we do ours in a downtown park) it becomes a potent example of how the capitalist system neglects so many. It is a deed that becomes propaganda, to borrow theory from the anarchists. I have had workers who work downtown message me telling me that they see us when they are at work. We have police watching us at every community meal. How can we be the richest country in the history of nation-states while so many go without?





We cook and serve to anyone who cares to eat, including each other, not as an act of charity, but to empower as well as nourish.

Judy, East Bay Food Not Bombs, 2nd Edition, 2000