



## **“Feasts from the Heart” Meal Program**

In many communities and cultures, it is traditional for friends and neighbors to prepare meals for their loved ones who are caring for a sick family member. It is an act of kindness that translates feelings of concern into a tangible expression of human compassion.

The families that stay at Ronald McDonald Houses are often far away from family and other support systems that would help them through a difficult time. They return to the House after a long day at the hospital, and cooking a meal for themselves may be low on their priorities. The chance for these families to sit down to a home-cooked meal is another way that makes the Ronald McDonald House truly a “home away from home” for families whose children are critically ill.

The following guidelines will help you as you plan your project:

- **Plan to cook for approximately 30-35 guests.** The House contains 23 guest rooms with varying occupancy. You are invited to prepare enough so that your group can join our families for dinner.
- **Please be aware that not all families show up at once to eat.** Experience has shown that a few families appear at the onset, with others trickling in as the evening progresses. Many families are unable to return to the House until much later at night, reheating leftovers at midnight and for lunch the next day.
- **No more than 12 participants in the kitchen is optimal.** The kitchen has cooking stations, but more than 8 people makes for tight quarters. If your group is larger, consider dividing the preparation and clean up or scheduling 2 meals on different days.
- **The best time for serving dinner is between 6:00 to 7:30 pm.** You can arrive as early as you think is necessary; anywhere from 4:30-5:00 is usually sufficient. Plan on staying long enough to serve and clean up.
- **We require that you cook on-site.** We are unable to receive food prepared at home. Please purchase all ingredients for your meal. The kitchen is equipped with pots, bake ware, and cooking utensils. Cooking on-site is a little more “up close and personal” and the families enjoy meeting and thanking the cooks.
- **You may purchase food from a retail food establishment as an alternative to cooking on-site.** If you choose to purchase food off-site, please use caution in storing, and transporting food items to minimize the risk of contamination. Please include a label with heating instructions.
- **Please determine the menu at the time you schedule the meal.** We try to vary the menu in a given week.
- **Be creative!** Like you, our families enjoy a change of pace. Consider preparing a weekend breakfast or lunch buffet. Or create a “theme” dinner complete with music and decorations. Mexican, Asian, Italian, and “tropical” are some ideas.

**Thank you for sharing your kindness with the families at the Long Beach Ronald McDonald House.**

**Here are some hints to help when you're here cooking:**

- We suggest that you clear off the counter and serve buffet style.
- Please check for condiments (salad dressing, ketchup, etc.) before opening a new one. We sometimes tend to collect too many open bottles in the refrigerator.
- You can use large aluminum pans filled with ice or on racks with sterno to keep foods cold or hot for families who may be returning a little later.
- All leftovers from community meals must be stored in plastic or disposable containers with lids. **DO NOT STORE FOOD IN COOKING POTS AND PANS.**
- All food must be covered and labeled with the "DATE" label.
- Ask the manager for assistance in finding any of these items that you need.
- Please help us keep the kitchen tidy by rinsing and loading dishes in the dishwasher. If more than half full – go ahead and run it. 😊
- Please empty the large trash can in the dumpster.
- Please help us by mopping the kitchen floor – lots of cooks in the kitchen usually mean spills and footprints.