



Feasts from the Heart Meal Program

In many communities and cultures, it is traditional for friends and neighbors to prepare meals for 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 House are often far away from family, friends and other support systems that would normally 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 long list of 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 40 guests.** There are 20 rooms in the Orange County Ronald McDonald House, each of which can accommodate up to four people. 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 demonstrated 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, re-heating the leftovers at midnight and for lunch the next day.
- **We can accommodate a maximum of 12 participants, including chaperones if your group includes minors.** The kitchen has three cooking stations, but more than 12 cooks makes for tight quarters. If your group is larger, consider dividing the preparation and cleanup or scheduling 2 meals on different days.
- **We ask that you be ready to serve your meal at 6:00pm.** You can arrive as early as you think is necessary. Most groups arrive anywhere between 4:00pm and 5:00pm, depending on what is being prepared.
- **PLEASE PLAN TO STAY LONG ENOUGH TO COOK, SERVE, CLEAN UP, AND PUT AWAY YOUR MEAL.**
- **We ask that you bring your ingredients and cook everything on site.** The kitchen is equipped with pots, pans, baking sheets, and cooking utensils. It is a little more “up close and personal” and the families enjoy meeting and thanking the cooks.

- **Please determine the menu at the time you schedule the meal.** We try to vary the menu in a given week.

Here are some guidelines for when you're here cooking:

- **Please clear the front counter and serve buffet style.**
- **Please check for condiments before opening a new bottle.** We sometimes tend to collect too many open bottles in the refrigerator. You are welcome to call the day before you are scheduled to come to see if there are items we already have on hand.
- **All leftovers from community meals must be stored in plastic or disposable containers with lids.**
- **PLEASE DO NOT STORE FOOD IN POTS, PANS, OR LARGE SERVING DISHES.**
- **All food must be covered and labeled with the date on which it was prepared.** There should be Sharpie pens in the kitchen for this purpose.
- **PLEASE HELP US KEEP THE KITCHEN CLEAN AND INVITING BY WASHING, DRYING, AND PUTTING AWAY ALL ITEMS YOU USED WHILE PREPARING YOUR MEAL.**
- Please empty the kitchen trash if it is full. The dumpster is located in the parking lot; if you have a problem finding it, please ask a staff member.
- Please help us by sweeping the kitchen floor as needed.

Thank for sharing your kindness with the families at Ronald McDonald House.