



BEYOND BELIEF NETWORK

Beyond Belief Network Guides: Pasta Benefit Dinner Guide

While this is a fundraiser, it is also a social event, and one that can include a lot of non-members. Tying your dinner in with the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster can be a way to make it playful and funny, but you can also just host a pasta dinner without this link. You can run this as a fundraiser for your group alone, or to support Foundation Beyond Belief or its quarterly charities.

Planning the Timeframe

The way you plan this event will depend largely on whether you make the food yourself, or whether you purchase it. While we suggest the latter, both are perfectly doable. Whichever path you take, the number of people you host will depend on the amount of food available; ideally, you should have between twenty-five to one hundred paying attendees.

Actually making or buying the food can be done a few days before the event - it can be helpful if you cook the food beforehand, and warm it before serving. However, in order to reserve space, advertise, and be sure what you're doing is legal, you'll want to start planning 6 to 8 weeks in advance.

Coordination

The main tasks for planning the event are securing the venue, advertising, cooking, and taking in money; this will probably require 2-3 coordinators, and more for really large events.

Coordinators will find the venue and work with the venue organizers to ensure everything is being done to health requirements.

You will need volunteers to advertise and make and serve food, which will probably require 5 to 12 volunteers. Coordinators who have concentrated on pre-event planning should double as event volunteers, of course.

Material Requirements

A critical limiting factor on this event is finding a venue, one with both kitchen access AND tables to eat at. Dorm cafeterias might work, but they might also not let students "behind the counter." You could do this at a member's house if it's a smaller dinner or if they have a gigantic house. Churches often have setups like this, and sometimes Moose Lodges or Rotary Clubs might as well. Look around your community and find an appropriate venue - this is a little more tricky than bringing someone's microwave to a meeting room.

As mentioned, you can either make or buy food. A rule of thumb is to assume 2-3 people per lb. of dry spaghetti, and 3-4 people per lb. of sauce. Dry pasta is available in large lots for as little as 29¢/pound; tomato sauce comes in industrial-sized cans for relatively cheap amounts. You may want to substitute or supplement this with sauces prepared by your members. This can yield greater variety, and allows you to have a sauce competition! However, unless many members can contribute a lot of homemade sauce, you'll want to buy some. Make sure that you don't just have meat sauce! You may have members who are vegan/vegetarian or have gluten allergies, so take that into consideration. There is gluten-free pasta available!

Besides food, you'll need at least two tables on which to serve the food, and a cashbox to collect money. It also helps to have a card reader (both PayPal and SquareUp are examples that charge very little for you to be able to use cards). Paper plates are too weak to (reliably) hold spaghetti. Look for durable disposable plates (Chinet, for instance), and plastic forks. If you're serving drinks, get plastic cups as well. Don't forget to recycle these after the event! If the venue doesn't have them already, make sure that there are tables and chairs for people to eat at.

Don't Forget!

It can't be emphasized enough how important it is to make sure that your event is in compliance with health codes. When you're serving food to large numbers of people, the dangers of contamination are multiplied. Know what you're doing and keep everything clean!

Tips to Get Started

Organize your personnel. Determine within your group who will coordinate the event, solicit volunteers, and select a beneficiary of the fundraiser (your group or somebody else). Find a place where you can reheat and serve food; if the dinner is connected to another event (e.g. raffle), make sure the venue can accommodate everything. Before going ahead, designate someone to check with the venue organizers that this dinner is in accordance with the necessary guidelines,

especially health codes. If they have any concerns, you should address them first – they will not hesitate to shut you down! Also, eating usually requires cleanup afterwards, so discuss charges for custodial services. In some states, there is a "church potluck" exemption which covers these types of events. Ironic as it may be, this may get you out of stringent health requirements.

Figure out costs. Assuming all issues are worked out with the venue, determine where and how you will get food (see above). Although prices can change, having a rough idea of the costs gives you a place to start. Look for discounts, and negotiate when possible.

Promotion. Promoting the event is crucial, since the number of people who come will make the difference between making and losing money. In particular, you'll want to send a press release to local media well ahead of time. If your dinner is focused on the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (FSM), a ton of FSM art and media is available at the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster [here](#), including a wide variety of pareidolia vaguely resembling Him.

Food Preparation. This will depend on whether you make your own food, or get it elsewhere. If your group is making the food, prepare it a day or two before your event. Coordinate transportation from kitchens to the venue – nobody should have to walk far with a big pot of sauce. If you don't want to make the food yourself, you should place your order at least one or two weeks in advance. Local Italian eateries are an option, or local catering services.

Set-up. Before the event, set up your tables and eating accoutrements. If you're setting up chairs/tables for people to sit at, do so now. Make sure that there are trash cans and recycling bins available! If your dinner is utilizing the Flying Spaghetti Monster, the FSM's chosen outfit is full pirate regalia, so feel free to decorate the venue with a pirate theme. A wide range of materials is available at the Church of the [FSM's website](#). Volunteers can also wear pirate clothing, although this may be problematic for people serving food.

Organize volunteers. At the event, you'll want 1 person heating the food, 1 person bringing food to the tables, 2 or 3 people serving, and 1 or 2 people overlooking – they are there to make sure things are running smoothly, and able to jump in if someone needs a break. These numbers, particularly the servers, are adjustable, especially depending on the size of the crowd and the variety of pasta and sauce being served. You'll also need 1 trustworthy person at the cashbox.

Clean-up. After the event is over, clean up and pack up your stuff. Even if you're being charged for custodial services, you should clean up! Extra food can be given to group members, if they want it. You may be able to donate it to a local food bank – check beforehand to see if and how this can be done. Before you spend/donate any profits, make sure all outstanding bills have been paid. Finally, be sure to thank all of your coordinators, volunteers, and your dinner attendees!

Questions or Concerns?

If you need help with planning your event or have additional questions, the best way to contact Beyond Belief Network is to use the contact webform, which enables us to track the resolution of your question: foundationbeyondbelief.org/contact-bbn. You can also email us at bbn@foundationbeyondbelief.org.