



THE FAMILY DINNER PROJECT + ON THE TABLE



Food, Fun and Conversation for Families



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Thank you for committing to bringing On the Table to your family dinner. The Chicago Community Trust's On the Table is an annual forum designed to elevate civic conversation, foster new relationships and inspire collaborative action. When we come together as a community to learn from and with each other, we have the power to impact both neighborhoods and lives.

This guide was created by The Family Dinner Project, with generous support from The Chicago Community Trust, to assist families in bringing that spirit of collaborative action to their own dinner tables. Throughout the guide, you'll find suggestions and resources to help you with your On the Table efforts through the three essential elements of a meaningful meal: Food, fun and conversation about things that matter.

To learn more about On the Table and to register, visit www.onthetable.com.

To learn more about The Family Dinner Project, visit www.thefamilydinnerproject.org.



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Food

Food is the thing that brings everyone to the table! It doesn't have to be fancy – the best family meals are the ones that help everyone feel welcome and connected to one another, regardless of what's on the menu.

For your *On the Table* dinner together, try one of our suggested #DinnerTonight recipes, included in this packet. Both are quick, easy and budget-friendly, leaving you more time to focus on enjoying one another's company.

Round out your meal with our Green Salad with Infinitely

Variable Vinaigrette and a healthy dessert: Cinnamon-Yogurt Dip with Fresh Fruit or Pocket Fruit Pies are easy enough for even the youngest dinner guests to help make for themselves.

thefamilydinnerproject.org/food/green-salad-with-infinitely-variable-vinaigrette

thefamilydinnerproject.org/food/cinnamon-yogurt-dip-with-fresh-fruit

thefamilydinnerproject.org/food/pocket-fruit-pies



Fun

Food may bring everyone to the table, but it's the fun that makes them want to come back! Enjoying one another's company, laughing together and providing opportunities for everyone at the table to engage in the meal are important to making family dinner a safe and welcoming place for all.

The dinner games included in this packet can be used with a variety of ages to help promote critical thinking skills and imagination (not to mention fun!). Research has also shown that using activities like these at the dinner table can build resiliency, literacy skills and self-esteem.



Conversation

Having a meaningful conversation at the dinner table is what *On the Table* is all about. Not only does the simple act of sharing ideas and listening to one another build social skills and family connectedness, but these specific conversation starters can help to promote the goals of *On the Table*:

elevating civility, fostering relationships and inspiring action. Through your family dinner conversations, you can help to build stronger, safer and more dynamic communities, one meal at a time. Print the conversation starters on page 8, cut them out and put them in a jar on your table.

Additional Resources

Set your table for fun and conversation with the printable table tents and placemats on pages 9-10. These were designed especially for *On the Table*!



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Enjoy and Share

Enjoy your *On the Table* family dinner, and be sure to share so you can inspire others! If you post photos or stories about your meal on social media, use the hashtag #OnTheTable2017 so your efforts can be counted as part of this year's movement.

SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING QUICK TIPS:

- Photos are great!
- Make sure everyone in your photos is aware you're posting publicly, and agrees to having their picture shared.
- Keep your sharing fun and positive, so others will be inspired by your stories!

STAY CONNECTED:

The Family Dinner Project

Facebook: facebook.com/thefamilydinnerproject

Twitter: @FDP_Tweets

On the Table/The Chicago Community Trust

Facebook: facebook.com/thechicagocommunitytrust

Twitter: @ChiTrust



Keep it Going

Let the food, fun and conversation be a part of your lives for *On the Table* and beyond! Every family meal can make a difference by helping to build stronger, healthier and happier families who contribute to making their communities a better place.

Try incorporating these four pillars of family dinner into your routine:

MAKE THE COMMITMENT

Recognize the things you really enjoy about gathering to share a meal. Share those with your family and make a plan together to repeat the experience. We usually recommend starting with one additional dinner together each week as a family goal.

MAKE IT SIMPLE

Choose a few easy, quick meal ideas for busy nights -- sandwiches, salads and even scrambled eggs are all good dinners! Start a list so you always have a fast dinner idea to bring everyone to the table. You might also ask family members to list their favorite dinners, and pick a day on the calendar when you can all work together to make those menus happen.

MAKE IT FUN

Try asking each family member to suggest a game or activity for the dinner table. You can also make family dinner a fun place to be by supplying trivia or dice games, inviting special friends to join you or having a spontaneous celebration like "Backwards Night" (dessert first, anyone?). Even something as simple as taking turns telling favorite jokes will make the dinner table a place where everyone wants to gather.

MAKE IT MATTER

Think about ways to use your family dinner time as a time to share hopes and dreams, set goals and give everyone a voice. Ask family members to take turns suggesting conversation starters or topics they'd like to discuss. Use the time to plan together for a fun family outing, community service project or other goal-oriented idea. Let everyone be a part of making your dinner conversation count!

For more ideas and resources related to these 4 pillars of family dinner, download our free program Food, Fun and Conversation: 4 Weeks to Better Family Dinners.

thefamilydinnerproject.org/4week-program/introduction

For daily food, fun and conversation inspiration, check out Dinner Tonight. thefamilydinnerproject.org/dinner-tonight/

Learn about On the Table and how this annual event strengthens communities at onthetable.com, and find out more about the Chicago Community Trust and its programs at cct.org. Get more resources and inspiration for your family dinners at thefamilydinnerproject.org.



DINNER TONIGHT

Tamale Pot Pie



FUN

Write down the names of people you admire and put them in a bowl. Take turns drawing a name and describing the person while the others try to guess who it is.



CONVERSATION

Rosa Parks said, "You must never be fearful of what you are doing when it is right." Have you ever been afraid to do the right thing?



Tamale Pot Pie

INGREDIENTS

Serves 6-8, depending on appetite
Filling:

- 1 1/2 lbs. ground beef, turkey, or bison
- 2 tbsp. olive or coconut oil
- 1 cup diced onion
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups diced sweet bell pepper
- 2 cups cooked dark kidney beans or black beans
- 1 1/4 cups tomato puree OR, in a pinch, use marinara sauce
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- Topping:
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup white whole wheat or all-purpose flour (you can also substitute masa harina if you need a gluten-free crust)
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1/2 cup oil of your choice (coconut oil works well here)
- or melted butter
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1 cup milk

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large skillet, prepare the filling by sauteing the meat, onions, garlic, and bell pepper in oil over medium-high heat until the meat is browned and the vegetables are softened, about 7 minutes.
2. Add the beans, tomato puree, and seasonings and stir to combine.
3. Allow the filling to bubble around the edges and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes to let the flavors combine.
4. Transfer the filling to an 8x8 oven-safe dish.
5. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.
6. Prepare the topping by whisking together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl.
7. Combine the honey, oil, eggs, and milk, and add to the dry ingredients. Stir thoroughly just until all of the ingredients are moistened.
8. Spread the cornbread batter evenly over the filling in the casserole dish.
9. Bake, uncovered, at 400 degrees for 35-45 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the crust comes out free of batter.

This recipe comes to us from Bri DeRosa and originally appeared on her Red, Round or Green blog. The filling can be made up to 2 days in advance, then topped with the cornbread crust and baked for a quick weeknight meal.

Visit thefamilydinnerproject.org to sign up for Dinner Tonight and get a daily helping of food, fun and conversation!





DINNER TONIGHT

Chef Nate's
Sausage Fusilli



FUN

One person leaves the table. The others choose an emotion. When Person #1 returns, the family acts out the emotion and Person #1 tries to guess what they're feeling.



CONVERSATION

Have you ever seen someone treated unfairly because of what they looked like or where they came from? How did it make you feel? How do you think it made them feel?



Chef Nate's Sausage Fusilli



INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. of ground sausage meat
- 1 pound of fusilli pasta
- 2 TBSP butter
- 1 TBSP olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- A dash of fennel seeds
- 2 lemons
- 8 oz white wine
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Crushed red pepper, to taste
- Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook the fusilli in boiling water according to package directions.
2. Combine the olive oil and butter in a large cast iron skillet.
3. Melt butter over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until golden brown.
4. Add your sausage meat and fennel, and cook it until golden brown.
5. Add the juice and zest of the lemon, stir, and after about 5 minutes, pour in the wine.
6. Stir, reduce heat, cover, and let reduce by half.
7. Drain the fusilli and add it into the sausage mixture. Stir until the pasta is well coated.
8. Season with salt, pepper and crushed red pepper flakes.
9. Serve with parmesan cheese and a lemon wedge.

This recipe was provided to us by kid Chef Nate, who says it's a quick, easy and delicious pasta dish. Chef Nate nominated this Sausage Fusilli as one of the back-to-school dinners that makes him smile on a busy weeknight!

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DINNER GAMES

GUESS THAT EMOTION

This is a good game to help children learn to identify feelings. Have one person leave the table for a minute. Once she leaves, the rest of the family decides on an emotion (or you can pick out of a hat).

Some examples include:

- Happy
- Angry
- Sad
- Mad
- Excited
- Nervous

When the missing family member returns to the table, the rest of the family eats and acts with that feeling in mind. For example, if the emotion is “worry,” someone might say “I have so much homework tonight I’m never going to get to sleep.” Or you can make it a bit more challenging for older kids by allowing only body language and facial expression to convey emotion, or even just facial expression alone.



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DINNER GAMES

WHICH ONE?

Whoever is asking the questions thinks of two people (e.g. Nana and Grammy; mom and dad) and asks the rest of the table questions to which only one of the two people is the right answer. (Which one got married when she was 19? Which one met her husband in California? Which one has 7 brothers and sisters?)

Playing this game is a great opportunity to teach your children a little about their family history, something research has found to positively influence children’s mental health.





DINNER GAMES

HEROES

This is a game of naming influential people who are heroes in your eyes. (Famous or not!) The trick is: the first letter of the hero's last name dictates what the first letter of the next person's first name must be. For example, if the first person names "Rosa Parks" the next person might say "Paul Revere" or another hero whose name begins with P. Keep going until someone gets stumped.



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DINNER GAMES

SALAD BOWL GAME

Before dinner each family member writes down the names of five people they admire, on five separate pieces of paper. These people can be fictional characters, historical figures, people you know personally, or people you have never met. Mix up all the pieces of paper in a bowl and place this bowl on the table during dinner.

Each family member takes a turn drawing a name from the bowl and describes this person to the rest of the family. The only rule is that the "describer" can not say the person's name or any part of the name. Once the person is identified, try to guess who put this name in the bowl, and then talk about why the person plucked from the salad bowl is admirable.





Enjoy These Dinnertime Conversation Starters

Cut Line

Talk about a time when someone did something thoughtful for you. What was it? Now talk about a time when you did something thoughtful for someone else. How did it make you and the other person feel?

If you could give one present to the whole world, what would it be and why?

Think of a person in your family (living or not) who gave back to others. In what ways did he or she give to others? What could you do to be more like this person?

What is one thing you can do to help someone else that doesn't cost any money?

Do you think it's more important to be kind or to be happy? Why?

In *The Lorax*, Dr. Seuss writes "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." What's something you care a whole awful lot about?

Who has the most power and influence in your community? Why do you think they're powerful?

Have you ever participated in a tradition from a culture that wasn't your own? What was it? How was the experience?

Is "fairness" the same as "justice?" Why or why not?

Have you ever stood up for something you believed in, even if others thought you were wrong? What did you do?

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "With freedom comes responsibility." What do you think that means?

Why do you think public spaces like parks are important to our communities? What's your favorite public space in your neighborhood? What would make your public spaces better?

Are there any cultures, languages or religions you'd be curious to learn more about? What interests you about them?

Have you ever learned something about another person's culture or beliefs that surprised you? What was it?

If you were showing a stranger around your neighborhood, what would you show them, and who would you introduce them to? Why?

What is one world problem you hope to see solved in the next 20 years?

What is the difference between a right and a privilege?

What are some things you can do to show another person you are truly listening to them?



Whoever is asking the questions thinks of two people (e.g. Nana and Grammy; mom and dad) and asks the rest of the table questions to which only one of the two people is the right answer. (Which one got married when she was 19? Which one met her husband in California? Which one has 7 brothers and sisters?)



RECIPE FOR CONVERSATION

Talk About: Civil Rights and Equality

1. Is "fairness" the same as "justice?" Why or why not?
2. Rosa Parks said "you must never be fearful of what you are doing when it is right." Have you ever been afraid to do the right thing?
3. Talk about a person you admire, famous or otherwise, who has fought or fights for the freedom of others.
4. Have you ever seen someone else treated unkindly or unfairly by others because they looked different, spoke a different language, or came from a different culture? How did it make you feel?
5. Have you ever stood up for something you believed in, even if other people thought you were wrong? What did you do? Was it hard to stand up for your beliefs?



The Family Dinner Project and On the Table Placemats:

1. Print on standard 8.5 x 11 Paper. 2. Cut along orange cutlines. 3. Set them on the table and enjoy!

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Interview Your Family!

- 1 Do you know any stories about what your neighborhood was like years ago? What have you heard? Who might be able to tell you about the neighborhood in other decades?
- 2 What is a trait of someone in your family that you admire and hope to have inherited?
- 3 How has your neighborhood or community changed in the past year? How would you like to see it change in the future?
- 4 Tell a story of a time you learned something unexpected from someone else.
- 5 When people talk about you 100 years from now, what do you hope they will say about you?



Cut Line

