

The Anarchist Teapot Mobile Kitchen's Guide to Feeding the Masses

Anarchist Teapot Mobile Kitchen

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Introduction

Over the years the Anarchist Teapot mobile kitchen has been asked many times for advice on mass catering. We actually decided a few years ago that we wanted to produce a recipe booklet, but never got it together. And I got tired of writing the same advice over and over again in emails, so I took it on to compile an info booklet.

So, first of all this is entirely based on our own, specific experiences, and what I'd say if you asked me: fuck, how and what do I cook for 150 people? It's also entirely based on our own motivations to cook. To us, it's nothing to do with making profits or even earning ourselves any wages, but it is to do with wanting to fulfil a role in the communities we build when we engage in grassroots resistance.

We figured a movement serious about attacking authority, confronting exploitation and destruction, and building a new world should be able to take care of itself. Feeding ourselves is a part of this. When lots of people want to come together, to discuss the state of the world, learn skills, share information, or take action, they need food. It's a bit crap if we have to resort to giving all our money to commercial caterers, or to sending people to the chip shop. Our kitchen is based within the anarchist and ecological movements, and we don't consider ourselves separate, some kind of service, or vending machine. And when we're cooking, we want to enjoy what we're doing, it's not a 'job', with a manager, but self organised and on our own terms.

We also think it's important to provide ourselves with decent, nutritious food that's vegan, organic, or at least good quality, locally sourced and affordable. Even if we're all doley scum we deserve to eat well!

The Anarchist Teapot – history and our set up

We started off as a series of squatted cafes in Brighton, back in 1996, with a changing collective – though a few people are still involved today – offering a 'collective front room', with tea, sometimes food by donation, radical reading materials and events. We kind of ran out of good buildings to squat, and started looking for a permanent, legal space which has by now become a reality – the Cowley Club co-operative social centre in Brighton.

On the other side of things, as a squat café we ended up getting asked to cook at some events. So, we obliged, and ended up talking to our friends from Holland, the anarchist catering collective Rampenplan, about what they do and how they do it... They would get called over to the UK to cook at events such as the Earth First! summer gathering, since there was no mobile kitchen based within the movement in the UK that could cater for the numbers. And they'd always lose money coming over due to travel costs. So they told us that if we were up for it, they'd lend us money to set up a mobile kitchen, plus get us some equipment. After helping them cook at an EF! summer gathering in 1998, we were up for it.

Our first meals were shite. Hopefully no one remembers them (though SOME people still make jokes about how long we should cook kidney beans...). Gradually we learnt, and over the years

we continued cooking at the EF! Gatherings, and everywhere and anywhere from free festivals – which we’ve given up doing by now – to community events in Brighton, gatherings for Radical Routes, the co-operative network, HES FES, the home educated kids’ network. We’ve cooked at demonstrations, squatted genetics test sites and other action camps, the autonomous space at the European Social Forum in 2004. We even almost ended up engaged to do the catering at the Green Party conference in Brighton...but that’s a long story... When we first set up, we were convinced that direct action was getting bigger and bigger and needed mobile kitchens and other infrastructure. Well, it didn’t and now we’re stuck with the big pans...

We have the equipment to feed up to 500 people three meals a day. We have three large welded pans and burners from Rampenplan, plus another large pan we found for 25 quid at a scrapyards years ago (part of our inspiration to become a mobile kitchen. Kind of like: “Oh we have a big stainless steel pan. We better cook for lots of people in it.”) And we generally have the equipment we need to be self sufficient when cooking, but we don’t have our own marquee.

We’ve cooked in all sorts of kitchens: in squats and community centres, out- doors in marquees (which we prefer!), or running after people with a pasting table and boxes of pasties at demonstrations. If we’re cooking for an event over a few days, we’ll do breakfast, lunch and dinner with tea and coffee on tap most of the time, and usually charge between £3.50-£5 a day for this. We try and get ‘reception’ at the event to sell meal tickets for the day – when they keep a record of tickets sold, we know how many people we’re cooking for, and we don’t have to handle money while serving. At some events we just ask for donations, and this has generally worked out quite well. Sometimes we don’t break even on an event – mostly this has been due to event organisers overestimating numbers of people attending and us buying in too much food.

We cook vegan, GM free food, and try to buy mostly organic ingredients – it depends on our budget and how much people are willing to pay.

There’s three people in the collective who have been involved since squat cafe times, and there are another 5/6 people who have been cooking with the Teapot for quite some years now. Then there’s always some other people who like to cook and will come along to events sometimes.

We usually rely on people who want to eat to help out – chopping veg, washing up etc. A few hours before every meal we’ll give out a shout, and hopefully people come a runnin, and we set up a table or two with lots of boards and knives. This also gives us the nice opportunity to meet and chat with people at an event...

We sometimes bring a bookstall along when we cook somewhere, sometimes we offer workshops too. And we like to listen to loud music while we cook.

This is now the second edition we’re printing, and since then, we also have helped co-ordinate the effort of a number of kitchens to feed thousands of people protesting against the G8 summit in Scotland, as well as cooking for up to 1500 ourselves.

Veggies Catering Campaign (Nottingham)

Veggies was started in 1984 by members of the local animal rights group involved in campaigning at McDonalds and wishing to make vegan food readily accessible. They started with a mobile van parked outside the Pork Farms factory, then applied for a street trading permit to set up a catering trailer 6 days a week on a city centre market. A freezer service has also been consistently

providing frozen supplies to other caterers, mainly via regional wholefood wholesalers, Lembas. An informal wholefood collective is also run for Veggies/Sumac volunteers.

In June 2001 with the opening of a new base at the Sumac Centre, an autonomous community resource centre, cafe and social club, Veggies gave up its daily street stall to concentrate on event catering, from table-top scale catering at protests and buffets for local community groups meetings, to catering stalls at major events including Green Gatherings and Glastonbury Green Futures Field. This change of emphasis also enabled Veggies to provide more full weekend catering to campaign gatherings, whether hosted at the Sumac Centre or elsewhere, including Radical Routes, Rising Tides, Genetic Engineering Network etc. A popular cafe space has also been provided at Earth First and Animal Rights gatherings, alongside Anarchist Teapot's field kitchen.

Equipment-wise, we have two catering trailers that are used to provide payas-you-go catering at festivals, fairs and some national demos. A mini-marquee and a tabletop market stall are available to provide additional space at major events. Gas burners and cook pots are available to provide field kitchens and catering for gatherings for up to 150 people. Buffets for 10–50 people are prepared in the self contained basement kitchen at the Sumac Centre, stretching to deluxe party buffets for up to 100.

For protest events on-the-streets we tend to provide pre-prepared pasties, cakes and drinks from a table top, bike trailer or simply tray-boxes 'on the run'. Payment is often by donation on a d-i-y self-serve basis. For more established events or pre-arranged demo locations we add home-made veggie burgers, hot drinks and other fair-trade snacks, individually priced from 50p – £2.50. For gatherings meals include curries, tabbouleh, vegetable soups, ratatouille, vegetable stews etc with rice, cous-cous, pasta etc and fresh salads, breads and spreads. Subject to travel costs, numbers etc the cost for a full week-end may be around £10.

Festivals, fairs and commercial buffets raise the funds to subsidise campaign catering. We also pay towards the Sumac Centre's mortgage, finance the library/bookstall and provide other campaign resources, including internet services for local and national campaigns. Although losses may occur, for example if a protest does not go to plan, other events tends to raise sufficient to cover running costs. However funds are usually at a minimum before the 'summer season' begins. We aim to maintain an emergency reserve, invested with Radical Routes and the Sumac Centre.

We have two workers job-sharing a minimum wage, minimum hours position to look after day-to-day organisation, doing associated campaign activities in their 'spare time'. Members with cookery skills prepare recipes and arrange menus. Others do education and media work, and give other technical backup. Local volunteers assist with many local campaign events and a nationwide network of volunteers is on call for events further afield.

With local buffets, club nights and in-house events at the Sumac Centre, Veggies is usually busy throughout the year; during the summer up to three major events may occur each weekend.

Publicity for events supported by Veggies is provided on the detailed diary and linked archive at www.veggies.org.uk/diary.htm. Although originally 'caterers to animal rights movement', Veggies now works with a wide range of groups and campaigns for social justice, environmental protection, human rights and peace issues.

Contact: 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX

Phone : 0845 458 9595

www.veggies.org.uk

HOW DO WE COOK FOR LOTSA PEOPLE THEN

These are things to consider if YOU want to set up a mobile kitchen. It's not a blueprint – there can't and shouldn't be one. The following section is about setting up, then the ones after are about planning to cook at an event, and the actual cooking, with recipes and meal ideas.

THINGS YOU'LL NEED

Contact Point/Outreach: an address – like a c/o address or a PO Box that you can advertise, and get bills/catalogues etc sent to, an email address, and a telephone. A mobile phone is useful for this, because you can take it with you to an event and take phone calls re. deliveries coming or whatever. If you use a pay as you go mobile, it doesn't need to be registered in any one person's name either. Then let people know you exist – make flyers, mail them out, introduce yourselves on email lists etc, make a website...

People: well, obviously, you need some people to be involved and feel some kind of commitment to a mobile kitchen. It's also good if these people enjoy cooking, and are half decent cooks... You'll also want at least one person who can drive and hire vehicles, and what's also great is having one person who is okay with getting up early in the morning to make people breakfast, when all the other cooks are hungover... Cooking can be hard work, but it's a lot less stressful, and more enjoyable, if your group consists of people who get on well and feel some sort of affinity with each other.

Even if you just have a small core group of dedicated people, you can take on quite a lot, because you will probably be able to get random people to help with the labour intensive work such as chopping veg and cleaning up at an event you're cooking at. It's nice to be able to involve people attending an event in the kitchen – it makes it feel less like 'service' and more like a part of what's going on. If you are volunteer based, make this clear when you're cooking – if there's a programme, get it mentioned in it, or have a board explaining what you're about, and include appeals for helpers.

Decision making: There's been whole books written about consensus decision making and non hierarchical organising, so I won't go into it much here. Basically, it's nice to work together on a project such as a mobile kitchen, make decisions together, and divide up responsibilities in a fair manner. The Teapot have a meeting every once in a while, to which all correspondence and requests to cook are brought and discussed, in which everyone's opinion is considered. Any jobs to be done are written down and divided up between volunteers willing to take them on, e.g. finding out more about an event, liaising with event organisers, ordering food, hiring van, sorting equipment, making a menu. Then we lose the piece of paper and lunch out jobs... oops. We discuss what kind of things we want to be cooking, and set the price/decide to do it by donation.

Register a food business? Any business handling food needs to be registered with the local council, which involves having an address, a named 'manager' (though no ID seems to be required), and filling out a form, possibly getting public liability insurance, then also probably getting a visit from food hygiene. But, this only applies to a business that serves food at more than 10 events a year, so if you can claim that you are only an occasional caterer, you don't need to be registered.

Equipment

Then you will need equipment. Most of this will cost money, so you'll need some of that too. You may want to do some fundraising, or borrow money off someone and pay it back after you've generated some surplus from catering. Maybe you can apply for a grant, for example through a council small grants programme (stress the community aspect, etc). We did this years ago and got to buy lots of things and get food hygiene training as well. Obviously you can start off with the bare minimum of what you need and improve your set up as you go along.

Put word out that you're looking for catering equipment – people may find things in squats, or tat things for you. If you have any contacts with a recycling/second hand furniture/clearance business, let them know you're after catering stuff. Look in the free ads and in second hand catering shops/warehouses, and on ebay/the internet. You may even come across a fully kitted mobile catering van/trailer someone's fed up with if this suits what you want to do, or squat somewhere with most or all of a kitchen in it.

Find a commercial catering supplies company that will send you a catalogue (you'll have to say you're a new food business). They all seem to be the same, and expensive, but they'll give you an idea on what kind of equipment you could be wanting and looking around for. If you're only going to cater once in a while, or usually for small events but one off for a big one, you might want to look round for a catering equipment hire place that's not too expensive. Bear in mind you'll really need to look after the stuff.

Burners, Pans: The most difficult thing to get on a budget if you're looking at mass mobile catering... You may need to look around a lot until you find some decent stuff, especially if you want to avoid aluminium pans (you'll feed everyone aluminium, which is not good). We were lucky and were able to buy some very large stainless steel pans welded by Rampenplan in Holland, with some matching welded propane burners. We can do about 300 portions in each of them. We also have our large pan from the scrapyard. We have a number of Dixies, which are rectangular, stainless steel pans with tight fitting lids that the army use, which hold about 50 portions. If you have a decent, proper army surplus in the area it may well be worth checking out. We've been able to get them for about £20 each. You may also find some large pans elsewhere e.g. catering supplies/second hand. Stainless steel with a heavy bottom is best. You might find a large stockpot with a thin bottom – you'll only be able to use this for water/very liquidy stuff, because anything else will burn like fuck in it.

Try to take care of your pans and frying pans – don't scrape them with sharp things, avoid lots of burning and then excessive scouring, and bending them out of shape, especially the bottom.

If you do get any very large pans, bear in mind you'll need burners that can handle them – especially the weight when full. The tar burners that get used by roofing businesses might work well (we considered getting some of them at first). You can get decent propane powered single ring gas burners that can take a fair bit of weight (ask in the shop) from some hardware stores, costing about £40-£50. Make sure they have tall enough legs to not sit too close to the ground. Gas burners need to be kept on a non-flammable surface that can withstand heat when in use! So, hard ground, grass (it may catch fire round it first, but then go out and stay out), paving slabs, or stone floor is best. They also need a bit of looking after, e.g. wiping the rust off with a wire brush.

You can also get camping cookers with two or more rings – again, propane is more powerful than butane, and rings with lots of little holes (hm. maybe they have a special name) are better

than the gas rings normal cookers have. Some people got decent large burners cheaply at a Sikh store in Birmingham.

When setting up at an event, you'll probably need gas bottles. Find out what your burner needs exactly, in terms of size of gas bottle and connection. Screw the pipe into the gas bottle tightly with a large adjustable spanner, threaded the 'wrong' way around, and then test all connections for leaks: use a bit of washing up liquid in some water, turn gas on and pour the liquid over the connection – if it bubbles up, there's a leak. Turn off, and try fitting it again, then test again. PTFE tape(plumbers tape) can help on a small leak you can't get rid of, but when you get home you should check it out. Multiple burners can all be connected to a single gas bottle, instead of using multiple gas bottles uneconomically, by using splitters to split the gas lines to feed into one bottle—ask at hardware stores, it's fairly easy.

Oven: A good oven is not only useful to bake things in, but also to keep food warm. Of course, it's not necessarily an option for a mobile kitchen. You can however get mobile oven type things from army surplus – we have one that's like an insulated stainless steel box you can put on top of a burner. It's not that big but we can make garlic bread or keep sausages warm in it. You may also be lucky and find a mobile, gas powered oven elsewhere... Or you may want to build an oven... There's whole books about that, check them out if you're interested.

Frying pan: Frying things for hundreds of people doesn't always work, but even for mass catering a frying pan is useful, if just to toast seeds or fry up some garlic. You can get good sized wok style frying pans from some Asian shops. Flat ones are more useful (especially if you ever want to fry burgers) than the typical curved wok but you might like both.

Electrical appliances: Even when you're in the middle of a field, you might have access to some leccy – it's a good idea to have a good, long extension lead in your kit – and this is useful for lighting, a stereo, and appliances. We try not to overdo it on appliances – there's a lot available! It's also worth bearing in mind that if you're using alternative energy sources set up on a site they might not be able to cope with high energy appliances such as water boilers, juicers etc.

A food processor is really useful – don't expect to be sat there pureeing 100 litres of soup in it, but you could use it for mincing garlic, ginger and other additions, blending salad dressing, making vegan mayo or pesto, and also for shredding cabbage or grating (and you will be so happy not to hand grate. It completely sucks to grate 25 kilos of carrots by hand). Try to find one with a big bowl.

An electrical hand blender is good for blending salad dressings and small amounts of soup. If you use a hand blender in a huge vat full of hot soup it will just burn out from the excessive steam. It's worth getting a blender with a brand name – we've thrown away more cheap, no-brand blenders than you can possibly imagine, but gotten a fair bit of life out of a Braun one we got on sale somewhere for a tenner. We don't use it straight in a hot pan but scoop out some soup/sauce and blend it in a large bowl then pour it back in, because the hot steam from the pan can fuck the blender.

Non electric alternatives to food processors and hand blenders include mandolin graters, and hand turned mincers. You may be able to get different attachments for these such as slicers and graters and mincers. If they're fairly large they can be quiet efficient.

Things like rice cookers, deep fat fryers, juicers, electric whisks, toasters, grills, or soup kettles may be useful depending on your usual menus. A large griddle could be a good investment if you think you'll mostly have mains access (it takes a lot of leccy to run), and you want to do

burgers often. Rampenplan have these excellent gas powered griddles that we haven't found an equivalent of anywhere in the UK.

An electric urn/water boiler also uses a lot of leccy, but you might want to have one for tea and coffee. While it's not boiled yet, put a mug over the spout to stop people helping themselves to disappointing cups of non-tea. When it's boiled, turn it down as low as possible to stop it steaming like crazy and wasting leccy. New water boilers of the standard, Burco variety cost about £100-£120. A good non electric alternative are gas powered water boilers, which cost about £130 new.

If you're not cooking things then serving them straight away, you'll need some way of keeping food at the right temperatures (i.e. hot and cold). You can either just not do such large amounts at a time and/or reheat things, or invest in some kind of fridge, and/or bain maries (pots sat in water that's kept hot), hotplates or chafing dishes. These aren't cheap new so if you want these, look for them second hand.

Microwaves are evil, and they make food taste icky too.

Baking trays: You might want some. Again, aluminium is a bad idea, unless you use the tray lined with greaseproof paper, cos you'll be scraping stuff out and it'll be full of metal. We do have some aluminium baking trays from army surplus, because they're big, have fitting lids, and we usually don't use them for actual cooking, just for keeping things warm and transporting cake around in.

There's billions of different types – if you're going for mass catering, and you have the choice, choose ones that stack into each other for better storage.

Cutlery, Crockery, Mugs: This also depends on how and what you want to cook and for how many – you might just do burgers in napkins and/or use disposable stuff. But disposable stuff = big waste over time, and it may become a good idea to invest in some crockery. You can also try getting people to bring their own cutlery and crockery to an event, and just having some as backup for the inevitable few who will forget theirs. Make sure this gets put on the publicity. When buying crockery/mugs in bulk from a shop, always ask for a bulk discount. Store and transport your crockery etc in sturdy plastic crates, that let air through (for drying) and preferably stack well. After cooking at your first event you'll probably end up with a bunch of crates that your veg/bread came in, or ask at places like a veg market for spare ones.

Plates/bowls: Proper porcelain plates might be easy to come by – second hand, tatted, from friends – but are a bastard to carry in large numbers if you are travelling to an event, and they do crack and break when chucked around in lots of washing up. Plates with chips and cracks will not pass any potential food hygiene inspection either. The Teapot first used tin/enamel camping style dishes, which are low, wide bowls – they have come in handy to serve both soup and main meals in, though they're a bit unsatisfying for proper meals. They have the advantage of stacking and taking up the minimum of space in storage, plus being fairly light to lug around. We also use hard plastic plates now. Also not heavy, nicer for a big meal, pretty much stackable, cheap, and don't break that easily. There's two main types, hard transparent plastic that looks slightly rubbery (hopefully you know what I mean, toddlers' drinking mugs are often made out of this stuff). They're good, but you do need to wash them up well and they get scratches from forks and knives. Then there's hard non-transparent plastic (that doesn't look rubbery) which is what we've been using, they scratch less and are more 'wipe clean', but they do have a tendency to just crack down the middle leaving a sharp edge of death. We got them all pretty cheap though, we found stacks of them in poundshops (sold as picnic plates). Another option are steel bowls

and plates of the Asian kind, ask around in Asian/Indian shops. They're usually light and you may get a good deal on them.

Cutlery: Easy to come by from second hand shops, and motorway services... Also, the simplest kinds aren't that expensive new and in packs of dozen from catering suppliers (£2.50-£4 per dozen for forks or spoons, a bit more for knives). We keep ours in small stackable plastic boxes, or, in small blue, stackable crates that mushrooms and some other veg come in – they're ideal, cos again they let air through and muck out.

Mugs: Stainless steel stackable mugs are wonderful, but expensive. Sigh. One day we'll get them. We started off with enamel mugs (to suit our enamel bowls) because they were light and we got them cheap, but after a few years they went minging. Now we just look around for mug bargains in poundshops (4 for a pound etc). It does get heavy to lug around all these mugs, and they do lose their handles and get chipped, but we haven't found a better solution so far. You might also like using the hard plastic 'picnic' mugs though I think they're weird to drink tea out of (but that's just me). White bread crates (not the red ones) are the best thing to store mugs in – ask at a bakery or keep them after your first bread delivery... They stack, are crates and let air through to help mugs dry, and are just the right height for mugs. We've lost more mugs than you can possibly imagine over the years. At every event, we leave with up to a whole crate less. Even when we go round the whole building/site collecting mugs, or offer children 5p for every mug they bring back... We have also used deposit systems, where mugs are kept behind our serving area and people have to come and ask for a mug and leave a deposit. This can work okay, you also at least may have money left at the end to buy new mugs with for the ones that went walkies, but it does involve someone being approachable for mugs all day which can be a tedious job.

Utensils: You'll need stirrers that are long enough to handle your pans. If you have really, really big pans, you can get long paddle type ones from catering suppliers but they're expensive (we did manage to get two – 45 quid each!!! – from the grant we got...), but you can also make your own. To start with, we took a pair of wooden oars, sanded them down, and cut out holes in the paddle to make them look like big plastic tea stirrers. Just don't store them anywhere damp – you'll get mould on them. Long wooden spoons come in handy too. We got a big, 5 litre ladle from Rampenplan that they'd welded themselves. This is the one piece of our tat that people really seem to get impressed by. This has proved indispensable for scooping water and food in and out of pans, it also has a hook to hang it up, because you don't want to put it down on the ground, then pick it up again and dip in the soup. You can also use a small pan for scooping, with a handle with a hole or hook on it to hang it up after use.

Because it's often just not possible to lift up a big pan full of hot water and cooked pasta/beans/potatoes/veg to drain, you are going to need something to scoop these out with. You can get big, curved, wire mesh scoops from Asian catering shops, the bigger the better. Using sturdy wire mesh baskets for deep fat frying might work too.

A large colander is still a handy thing to have, for washing salad or draining from smaller pans. Other things are: serving spoons both perforated and plain, tongs, ladles, fishslices (for frying, and serving up burgers or bakes), whisk, graters, scissors, peelers, all are essential or at least useful. If you're baking, you'll also want a good spatula, sieve/sifting device, scales, measuring jug, and wire cake cooling trays. Garlic crushers – either get a good quality, larger one, or just chop by hand or in a food processor. Cheap garlic crushers are frustrating and break quickly. The same goes for tin openers. If you're doing a lot of tin opening, especially on large size tins, a normal, cheap crap opener will give up very quickly. Invest in a decent tin opener.

Urns: I mentioned electric urns earlier. They'll serve most purposes, they just need watching and refilling, but if you're talking about catering for hundreds of people, you'll either need a number of electric urns, or you can opt for using insulated ones filled with ready made teas and coffee, avoiding using thousands of teabags and making real coffee possible. We copied Rampenplan in this. Basically, you use a big pan to boil up loads of water, when boiled, you ladle them into insulated urns with tea or coffee in them, and then put these out and the drinks will stay hot for quite a while. We made our own giant teabags by sewing them out of muslin (not too thick, fine or coarse), and we made a giant coffee filter to fit in the top of an urn out of a wire coat hanger and muslin. We use one pack of 125g loose breakfast tea for normal tea, up to 2 packets of 227/250g coffee for a full urn, and a large handful of loose herbal tea. We leave normal tea in the urn for about 10–15 minutes and herbal teas longer. Remember to check that the spout is shut when you start pouring water in... If the spout is leaky, it probably just needs tightening.

You can often find urns, electric and insulated, second hand – look around, put word out...

Chopping boards: You'll need quite a few of these, especially if you'll be trying to get people to come help you chop, and it's worth looking round for large sturdy ones. Wooden ones are fine, but food hygiene requirements involve colour coded hard plastic chopping boards – green for salad vegetables, brown for root vegetables (cos they leave bits of dirt in the board, then that gets on salad veg that won't get cooked), and white for bread.

If a chopping board is getting really scratched up, you should either chuck it, cos it won't pass any food hygiene inspection and that's for a reason, or clean it with a chopping board scraper which I've never seen in action so I have no idea what I'm talking about right now. But they exist.

If you're using boards to put hot things on – use wooden ones, not plastic ones!

Knives: Again, something worth investing in – cheap, flimsy knives are false economy, and they just won't cut it (Ha. Ha.). We like Sabatier and Global which are expensive but we've had two Sabatier sets (5 knives for ca. £80) for over 6 years and they're still really good. A few cheap knives are good to have around for doing things like opening packets or peeling garlic with.

Take good care of knives – keep them in a knife block or a canvas wallet or a knife box (also when transporting them –knives potentially flying round the back of a van doesn't sound very safe). It's very important to sharpen them regularly, once they lose their sharp edge, they'll stay blunt forever. Learn how to use a knife sharpener steel, or get yourself a pull through knife sharpener. Do NOT let anyone use a good knife to cut boxes open, open tins, cut through wires, as a screwdriver, or anything like that – it's pure evil. Threaten death.

Bowls and boxes, plastic stuff: Food storage boxes, the larger and the more the better, with lids, food grade (i.e not toxic on food), and stackable are indispensable for keeping chopped veg until use, washing veg in, serving salads in, etc. We've been using large square boxes (I think they're intended for cake) with lids from Poundstretcher at £2 each for years – they do crack/break eventually but they're stackable and always replaceable. Rampenplan have huge low wide plastic buckets that they got from the market—we've seen them used in fish stalls at the market here, so if you can stomach it go ask at these (then scrub very clean!). Bear in mind you'll be wanting to cover prepped food until use, so lids are important, or clean tea towels that are large enough, like Rampenplan use with their white buckets.

Large mixing bowls are useful, as well as some bits of Tupperware to keep smaller amounts of chopped veg or herbs in. Try to keep lids together with boxes! Some jugs are good for salad dressing or small amounts of sauces.

You'll also want at least two sturdy, large plastic boxes for washing up, especially in a field kitchen. We use proper strong plastic storage boxes with handles. If you can find a decent sink surface, this may be worth connecting up to the water supply where you're cooking, for washing up and/or handwash, though using hot water may become an issue.

Hosepipe: Useful item if you have really large pans, both to fill them up with water, and to wash them up, also useful if the tap is not in the kitchen. You can also use water containers – it's good to have one with a tap anyway, to put out with fresh water for people to help themselves to rather than constantly coming in to your kitchen and turning the tap on. You can get them from camping shops or second hand.

Hosepipes will need to be food grade, i.e. not just garden hose which taints the water and makes it taste icky. You can get them from camping/caravan shops. They will also need fittings, one at the end of the tap – don't skimp on the quality of the jubilee clip/fitting you use, if the water supply's powerful it'll burst off and you'll be constantly running out getting drenched fitting a crap one back on – and something on the other end that suits your needs, like a spray tap, a multi function one, whatever.

After an event, drain your hosepipe (you don't want to store it full of water getting manky inside) and leave to dry if you can. Before an event, rinse it out before using. We have a hose that flattens when empty, so it can be wound up on a reel and not take up too much storage space.

Food Hygiene things: For actual food hygiene info, see later. If you're cooking anywhere you reckon you will have to deal with officials, you will need certain equipment to comply with food hygiene. Plates and mugs shouldn't be excessively cracked and chipped. Opened bags of sugar/beans/herbs etc should be kept taped shut, or in Tupperware or jars with lids. You will also need thermometers for temperature controls. Food Hygiene people also are really into signs saying such obvious things like: Now wash your hands, or which chopping board for which food, or No Smoking.

First Aid: You really should have a decent First Aid kit in a kitchen. You'll at least need a huge amount of plasters. For catering purposes, people generally use blue plasters, the idea is that if they come off and fall into food, they'll be easy to spot! The kit should contain the normal first aid stuff, plus things against burns, and bug bites and wasp stings if you're cooking outdoors.

Fire safety stuff: A fire in a kitchen isn't uncommon, so you may want to invest in a fire extinguisher (a small one costs about £15-£20 new at B&Q's or somewhere like that). A fire blanket is good too for potential fires in pans.

Laundry: Teatowels are useful for holding hot things or covering food, but they aren't much use for drying – you'll just get through millions of them drying 100 plates. It's much better to dry things in the air. Also, when used too long, teatowels are evil germ collectors. The same goes for handtowels. We actually end up using paper towels a lot for drying our hands, and for things that do need drying immediately, or to dry things well before putting in storage (because stacked wet plates in storage will go disgusting). Aprons are fun for not getting covered in food. They're actually not supposed to protect you though, they're to protect the food from you! Somehow. I guess if you're all crusty and stuff (not like us of course).

Tables: For serving, food prep, keeping spices and stuff on, washing up, tea and coffee serving... Figure out how many you'll usually need. You can get sturdy tressle tables with folding legs from army surplus which are by far the best to use. You can sand them down and paint them with gloss paint to create wipe clean surfaces – they'll keep better too. Hard plastic tables with

folding legs are good, but can be quite heavy, and expensive unless you find a bargain second hand. Pasting tables just collapse – not recommended, except maybe to keep aprons on?

Marquee: You might be looking at a setup for a stall, in which case a market stall – basically a scaff type framework you pin tarps onto and you can half or entirely cover with work surfaces – might suit you, you can get them new for ca. £100 and store it disassembled. Or you might like to use a catering trailer – look in the free ads, they're often for sale by failed businesses. Or you might be cooking mostly indoors in existing kitchens. Or, if planning to cook outdoors most of the time, you might want to invest in your own marquee. A large, light one – white, or cream – is much, much nicer to cook in than the usual dark green ones because it gets hot and steamy from the burners. We don't have one, so I don't know much about this, we always just ask the organisers of an event to provide us one, which they usually happily do.

Random other: We always also pack: stereo—batteries—music—gaffatape—adjustable spanner (to connect gas bottles) and other tools—string—masking tape (useful for labels/signs) – marker pens—strong binbags—tons of washing up sponges and surface cloths, plus washing up liquid and antibacterial surface cleaner. We once saw a cool portable bin—I think it was from a garden centre and it folded down or pulled up into a wire/cloth bin, we want one.

Van/Transport: You might be lucky enough to have a van around available to use. Wahey, there's a problem solved. If you haven't, depending on how many events you cook at it might be worthwhile to invest in your own van, if you have a few people who can drive it. We've mostly just hired vans for an event, and added it to the budget for the event – this leaves us with no running costs. Buying a van, insuring it, and keeping it in shape can all cost a lot, so do think it over. You may also be able to use a car with a trailer. A dividing board between the cab and the back is a good idea because heavy tat flying through the division can cause fatal injuries. We used to pack up a van and cram cooks in the cab and also in the dark hole of the back. Then we realised potential death was not worth it, and now we'll have three people driving up in the cab of the van, and send other cooks by car/other transport going/by public transport.

Storage

If you're accumulating all this kitchen tat, you'll need somewhere to store it. You'll also need space to keep herbs/spices/dried leftovers where rats or slugs won't eat it. A garage is great, or a basement, a van, or a spare room. We started off with the big pans in the shed, and everything else under our beds or behind our sofa... Now, thank fuck, we rent some storage space in the basement of our social centre, and have shelves there to store food on, and stack everything else on pallets on the floor.

PLANNING TO COOK AT AN EVENT

What follows is things you'll be needing to think about/sort out before you cook somewhere, and organise when you're cooking.

Where Will We Be Cooking?

Well, there are so many settings you could be cooking in: in your own kitchen at home, in a kitchen you can use regularly in a social centre, in an indoors kitchen you only use during an event, cooking things indoors and transporting elsewhere, in a festie stall, in a marquee in a field near a town, or out in the middle of nowhere... But wherever you are, find out as much as you can about where you will be cooking before an event. If it's an indoors kitchen, how much space is there? Is there safe storage space for food? Is there a sink or two in the kitchen? Is there a stone floor or sturdy, non-flammable surface you can set up a burner on? Where does rubbish go, is there recycling/composting? What kind of kitchen appliances are already there, or cleaning supplies like mop and bucket?

If you're taking food out somewhere, where will you be able to set up? Will your dodgy pasting table take the weight of what you're taking? Will there be a bin nearby or should you take one?

If it's an outdoors event, will the event organisers be supplying a space to cook in (marquee)? Will there be a water point next to the kitchen? Are there any other things on site you could use (pallets for food storage off the ground, electricity supply, strawbales or chairs to sit on, tables, bits of wood to make things out of, hosepipe, tilly lamps, fire extinguishers, ...)? What is the vehicle access like? Where does the rubbish go?

We definitely prefer cooking outdoors – you don't end up with a slippery floor covered in food you need to constantly clean, we can set up our big burners without worrying about setting the floor on fire, make a wet mess washing up, and generally, it's nicer to be in a field than in a city!

Food/Menu:

Before an event, you'll need to decide what you're cooking, and what you need to get as ingredients and where from, who'll be doing what etc. Before anything we cook at, we make a menu first, then write on it what ingredients exactly we need for each meal, down to oil and spices (of course whoever's cooking can go wild on the herbs and spices, if they so wish...) with amounts according to numbers expected. Bear logistics in mind too—pans available, cooking times etc. The menu becomes our shopping list, and we also keep it in the kitchen for reference.

We usually divide up responsibilities then for each meal on the day, instating one person as the 'cook' for each dish, who then nabs others to help them wash and chop veg or do other prep. For example, for a lunch with spaghetti, sauce, salad, tea and coffee, it'll look like this –

estimated 100 people (revise amounts if less or more people)

SPAGHETTI – 12kg (2 boxes) – Dick, in Pan 2

SAUCE – 5kg onion, garlic, 5kg courgettes, 3kg red lentils, 10 large tins chopped toms and 5 tom puree, 1 large tin olives, basil, oregano, paprika, 1 bottle red wine – Tom, in Pan 1

SALAD – 10 mixed lettuces, a few red onions, tomatoes and cues, dressing with white wine vinegar and olive oil and fresh parsley – Harry

TEAS and COFFEE – Dick (cos he’s boiling up loadsa water for the spaghetti anyway), in Pan 2 before spaghetti

There might also be someone responsible for setting up the serving, taking meal tickets, or clearing up after... You can make rotas for everything, hurra! If we’re trying a new recipe we’ll write it down here as well.

Maintain a good supply of herbs and spices – best stored in sealable large jars packed together in a crate/box. Herbs and spices lose their taste over time, and do go off, so remember to keep the best before dates written down, and don’t exceed them by too much.

Make sure you have enough ‘staples’ for any event: oil, vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, salt and pepper, margarine, flour/cornflour (to thicken things last minute!), stock/bouillion (check ingredients if you want it vegan, or nut-free), tahini, vegan mayo, soy sauce, seeds, sugar...

We almost always forget something, or find we’re running out of something, and need to do last minute shopping and send someone off to buy a few more things. Even after 7 years we have been unable to avoid this. In fact, once we forgot all our herbs and spices and had to contend with making bland food the whole weekend.

Food Suppliers

You’ll need to get your ingredients from somewhere, and if you’re buying in bulk, there is absolutely no point going to a normal supermarket. You should be able to get discount bulk buying accounts with food suppliers, whether you are going for organic food or non organic. Even if you are just going to your local market to get veg, you should be able to negotiate bulk discounts – and a 25kg sack of potatoes will always work out cheaper than buying smaller amounts. You might also be able to blag some cheap/free things that are about to be chucked out.

We like to source food suppliers local to where we are cooking. So if, say, we are cooking for a few days in a field in Surrey, we’ll ask the event organisers if they know any decent suppliers of organic veg, bread, dried goods (also gas if you need) in the area. If they have contacts phone these, otherwise/and check in the ‘Organic Directory’ for suppliers in the area. (you can access it for free if you log in at whyorganic.org). Sometimes it’ll make more sense to get locally grown non organic veg rather than organic but imported veg—ask around for a nice farmer/where the farmers market is, and check food guide directories on the web.

Phone these contacts, and say: “We are a catering group and we are cooking at an event in ... for ... days and ... people. We’re looking for bulk supplies of (organic) veg/bread/wholefoods. What do you do?” Which will lead on to a conversation of our needs, their prices, delivery possibilities, delivery charges, how payment will be handled, and also if they can help us find other suppliers. Sometimes it’s good to explain that you’re a non-profit making, volunteer collective cooking for a grassroots event – if you get the feeling the people you’re talking to might support that. If they sound really professional, pretend to be just as professional too, instead. Ask for the name of the person you’re speaking to, so that you know who your contact person is. Some, especially larger

companies, will want trade references if they are unfamiliar with you (some will not care and just be happy to get large orders). This means that you might get a form to forward to another company you've traded with (i.e. ordered from and paid on time). Sometimes paid receipts will do.

Nearer the time, we will decide who sounds best/nicest of the suppliers we spoke to, and place our orders – best to give them at least a week's notice, and arrange for someone to be there (either ourselves, or someone involved in the event) to accept the orders and hand over payment. We usually end up with up to four deliveries: wholefood dried goods, vegetables, bread, and gas. If delivery to the site you're cooking at isn't possible, you will need to get things delivered to where you're based, and pack it all in the van – bear in mind that this might not fit! You also might end up driving off to pick up your order, if the supplier doesn't deliver, or the delivery charge is really high, or their delivery days are unsuitable. There's usually some items that are uneconomical to get from bulk suppliers, for example one jar of mustard, or one bottle of soy sauce. We just go to the shop for these bits and bring them along.

Cash and Carry: There might be one in your area, and they're usually full of over packaged stuff of not too great quality, but you might want to check them out anyway. You may be able to borrow someone else's card. Or, phone them and find out how to apply for a card yourself. You'll need to be a registered business and bring along your registration to apply for a card (for which you'll need some named individuals, usually with ID – though they probably won't check ID when you come to shop), or at least provide some trade references. We usually only go to the cash and carry for large tins of tomatoes, oil, and pickles.

Wholefood suppliers we have ordered from are: (most of these do both organic and non-organic bulk foods but generally better quality than cash and carry supplies)

Suma, Lacy Way, Lowfields Bus Park, Elland, HX5 9DB, 0845 458 info@suma.coop, www.suma.co.uk (deliver almost all over the England and Wales)

Lembas, Unit 5, The Old Tannery, Whiting Street, Sheffield S8 9QR, 0845 458 1585, sales@lembas.co.uk, www.lembas.co.uk (deliver 80+ mile radius of Sheffield)

Infinity Foods, 67 Norway Street, Portslade, East Sussex BN41 1AE, 01273 424060, info@infinityfoods.co.uk, www.infinityfoods.co.uk (deliver in the South East)

Essential, Unit 3, Lodge Causeway Trading Estate, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 3JB, 0117 958 3550, contact-us@essential-trading.coop, www.essential-trading.co.uk (deliver in the Southwest)

Green City, 23, Fleming St, Dennistoun, Glasgow, Scotland G31 1PQ, 0141 5547633, info@greencity.co.uk, www.greencity.co.uk (deliver in Scotland)

Skipped Stuff: If you decide to try and get food that's been chucked out to cook with, you'll need to be more flexible in your menu, and make sure the people you're feeding will be alright about eating waste food. A lot of restaurants and food shops and veg markets chuck loads of still decent food out, every day, so try and figure when they chuck out what, or approach them saying you are a charity cooking group and would appreciate any leftovers to cook meals with for those in need, or whatever. You don't have to take everything they offer you! If you're skipping, try and find the skips of food processing businesses or wholesale suppliers/markets, because they will be chucking out loads of stuff in bulk that isn't even out of date yet, and the skips will generally be better than those of retail outlets.

Bear in mind you're feeding other people, who may have more sensitive stomachs than you, and that you might be happy risking food poisoning yourself with something a bit dodgy, but maybe not 150 others... Wash all veg well before use. Avoid mouldy veg, the roots of the mould

will have spread through the whole vegetable even if you cut off the obviously mouldy bit, and lots of people are allergic to mould. It's inadvisable to use packaged food that's been opened (you might be fine eating it yourself but that's up to you). Take weather conditions into account, for example, food that's been sat in a skip for a day in the hot sun is much more likely to be off!

Other Logistical Issues:

Wherever you're cooking, put some thought into how you're setting up your kitchen so that it makes the cooking easy, things are to hand, and you won't get in the way of each other. If you can, make yourself a nice 'rest area' too.

Food Storage while cooking: Try to organise your food storage in a way that makes sense, so that you can find things, and also so that it's all safely off the ground (not going soggy/attracting rats), covered (so bugs can't fly into the bags), or not liable to go off from heat. You can for example put all the breakfast items together in one place, and all the condiments, all the veg... We sometimes use the van for additional food storage, e.g. dried goods and tins, if we're not expecting to use it too much during the time.

Washing vegetables: you'll need a few decent strong plastic boxes to wash veg in. Some scrubby sponges or brushes should be set aside just to use on veg (not to get mixed up with washing up sponges), and really muddy veg should maybe even be washed in one and rinsed in another box. Some veg doesn't really need washing: onions, garlic, tightly packed red and white cabbages, organic tomatoes, cucumbers, um, I might be missing out some really obvious ones here. Loose cabbages, lettuces, leeks and basically veg with 'folds' in should be sliced, torn or held apart while washing to get into every corner. Some salt in the washing water helps 'disinfect' veg, apparently. And some vinegar in lettuce water helps keep the lettuce crisp.

Handwash: A food hygiene requirement, and a sensible one really: have a separate handwash in the kitchen, that you don't use for anything else, with some decent liquid handwash soap (not perfumed – your food might start to taste of it). Encourage volunteers to wash their hands before handling food. If you're just using a bowl for this, change the water regularly, and preferably use boiled/warm water. You may also want a separate bowl for surface wash.

Washing up: If you're cooking indoors and you have a good big sink with two bowls, well, use this. Otherwise, set up a washing up area, either to be done by you or put out for people to do their own (but see notes on food hygiene). It will get messy so having it on a table/in a space of its own is best. Put pallets on the ground around it if you think it'll get muddy. One tub/box should have hot water – as hot as you can handle – with washing up liquid, and one should be used for rinsing. Have a few sponges and clothes and brushes there. Put a crate next to the washing up to stack things up in to dry – having an extra pot for cutlery helps prevent chaos piles with everything falling to the floor.. Set up a bin next to it, e.g. a box with a binbag in it. Change the water regularly.

Serving: You might just be serving as and when people come up and want stuff, but if you're serving a meal at a set time your serving needs to be organised a bit so it doesn't result in chaos and violence. Avoid looking like you're ready before you actually are cos people will start queuing up. You may want to do 'self service', but we definitely prefer serving people, because it's much quicker, we can make sure there's enough for every-one, and it's better from a food hygiene aspect too.

Clear a table to serve from, and give some thought to the potential ‘flow of people’ – e.g. they come in this way, give money/get tickets ticked here, then pass servers and take their plate here, then get to grab cutlery/salt/pepper, then can go get themselves a cup of tea or bread somewhere off to the side and not in the way, and/or leave out that way... will all that work? Have one person serving each part of the meal, or even set up sideways – see pic – and serve in two lines with two people serving each part of the meal on both sides. Have some music on to entertain people waiting and to entertain yourselves. We also always have 1–2 cooks not serving but hovering in the background ready to refill food served.

It’s nice to let kids queue jump. If they’ll eat your food at all, fussy things. If you’re using really big pans, ladle some food into not so huge pans to serve out of. Refill when needed, and maybe even reheat before the next lot of serving. Set up the serving so you’re putting hot food on first, and salad/raw food last cos it’s icky if it gets covered in cooked food.

Give people equal portions but try to have enough for seconds for the big eaters – make sure you’ve served all firsts before you call for seconds. We just let people help themselves to seconds, but you may end up with fistfights over the last veggie sausage.

Waste water: if you can re-use water you cooked veg in (this does not go for potatoes and most beans – it always goes scummy), for example in a sauce or soup, do so. Generally you will need to be tipping away a fair bit of water though, plus washing up water, so if you’re indoors, make sure you’ve got a drain that can handle large amounts of water splashing through it all at once (and keep a floorcloth handy to wipe the floor after to avoid it getting slippery and dodgy). If there’s an outdoor drain near the kitchen, use that. If you’re in a field, ask whoever’s usually living there/using the site where a good spot near the kitchen would be to make a slosh pit. This means digging a hole in the ground you can empty dirty water into in the hope it’ll drain away (some ground is not good for this). The deeper the hole the better, basically you want to hit a place it can drain into. Position pallets over and beside it, so you can stand over the hole and tip stuff in, or rinse things off with a hose over it etc. We need these to wash up our large pans over. Also ask if it’s okay to just fling washing up water into a ditch or bush or wherever. But any water with traces of cooked food should really go into a slosh pit or somewhere far away – it will attract rats etc. if randomly tipped out by the side of the kitchen.

Rubbish: It’s impossible to not produce large amounts of rubbish. Find out what can be recycled where you’re cooking, you’ll generally have shedloads of compost (make sure you know whether the compost will be able to take citrus peelings, garlic/onion peelings, and cooked food), lots of cardboard packaging and boxes that your ingredients come in, and maybe tins and bottles depending on what you’re using. People seem to like to have somewhere to scrape their food remains into so set a compost box up next to the washing up. Make sure you don’t leave food remains in the kitchen overnight when the kitchen’s unattended but get it out of there—and not just in a binbag right outside—because it will attract rats.

Dietary requirements: If you can, ask people to get in touch with you BEFORE an event to discuss any allergies/special dietary requirements. We do this a lot but hardly anyone responds, then we come cook somewhere and 10 people complain they can’t eat this that or the other, AFTER we’ve cooked everything... fucken hell. Hopefully people do come up to you and you can look through your menu and see how you can accommodate them. If you have a few different parts of a meal, you may be able to give someone more of what they can eat and leave out what they can’t. If you’re using nuts in a meal, it’s a good idea to leave them to be stirred in last

minute so that any potential nut allergies can have some without. A lot of people seem to be going wheat free these days, so bear this in mind when planning meals.

FOOD HYGIENE

It's advisable for at least a few people in the group to do a food hygiene course. A community training organisation in your area might offer free accredited courses for community groups. Otherwise, the local council will run accredited courses which usually are over one day, or over two half-day sessions, with a multiple choice exam at the end. If you face a food hygiene inspection cooking at an event (something that has happened to us a few times – especially at events accessible and open to the public), showing a few food hygiene certificates will improve your chances – as well as cooking vegetarian or even better, vegan food – meat and dairy worry inspectors more. The things we have noticed food hygiene inspectors seem to be especially keen on are: notices displayed in kitchens re. food hygiene, temperature control systems, having a separate area for day clothes (jackets, bags etc), and cooks wearing aprons and tying back their hair.

Also, knowing about food hygiene isn't a bad thing if you are taking on the responsibility of feeding hundreds of people, and you don't want to make them ill. It's also not just important within the kitchen. If people aren't washing their hands properly after going to the loo bad things happen and the thing is that kitchens will get blamed, so it's worth feeling a bit responsible for general hygiene where you're cooking, especially if you're in a field. Check if there are handwashes by the loos, set up a handwash outside your kitchen people can use before they eat, and one by the washing up. Use antibacterial handwash.

A lot of food hygiene is common sense, but the main points are:

- Wash your hands before handling food. Kitchens are supposed to have notices up saying this. Have a separate handwash basin, or bowl, with anti bacterial soap.
- Don't do gross stuff like pick your nose or sneeze into your hands, then carry on handling food
- Don't use tea towels when they're soggy and manky – avoid them altogether, or wash them often.
- Food needs to be kept at the right temperatures. Hot food should actually be hot when serving, i.e. over 70 degrees, and cold food should have been stored, covered, in somewhere cold (under 5 degrees). Lukewarm food breeds bacteria and bugs etc. Monitoring temperature is an important food hygiene requirement, so if you think you'll be inspected, you'll need thermometers in any fridges/freezers, and a probe thermometer to test cooked food (they come in a huge price range – a cheap one will do). You'll also need a book to log the temperatures in (cheap from catering supplies – useful cos it tells you exactly what you need to do).

- Don't leave food to be served sat around for too long, and keep it covered when not serving. If you are keeping prepped stuff for longer than a couple hours, it should be labelled with the date it was prepped.
- Store all food stuffs off the ground (even indoors). A pallet will do for this if you're outside. Don't leave packaged food uncovered/exposed.
- Surfaces used for food prep and serving should be wipe-clean, i.e. either gloss painted wood tables, hard plastic, stainless steel, or covered with a plastic-y tablecloth.
- You should be using utensils when serving food (not serving with your hands, or letting people help themselves to food with their hands).
- Be aware of Health and Safety – i.e. don't block the paths you are using when cooking with boxes, leave knives on the edge of a table, walk around with knives pointing away from you, leave things hanging off precariously, leave exposed wiring, make sure your gas lines etc are obvious and not in the way, etc.

FINANCES

Ooh the fun bit. If you're not a registered company, you won't really have to keep accounts (if you are – well, you'll have to keep proper accounts, and you'll need to go somewhere else for advice on that). But you will be handling money, and you'll probably be keen on not losing money.

You can open a clubs and societies account at most building societies with two or more signatories pretty easily. Choose a name for the account that doesn't sound too far off from what you're calling yourselves. We didn't want to open an account called 'Anarchist Teapot', so we opted for some entirely random harmless sounding name, and this has led to lots of unnecessary confusion. I think I'd call it 'Teapot' if we were doing it again...

When you set up, you will need a fair bit of cash – to get equipment, but also to pay for the ingredients upfront before you cook at an event (and eventually get the money back).

We usually budget for each event by itself. We take the expected numbers, and round that down (event organisers are almost always over optimistic, somehow). Then we figure out how much money we could expect to take. Then we divide that figure up into the different categories – wholefoods, veg, bread, gas, random extra shopping, transport, plus running costs if there are any. Usually we add up what we expect to be spending, then go, oh we need to cut that down. No olives for these people this time. Or we may find we're under the budget in which case people get more olives, and maybe even nuts.

This is an example of a budget for an EF! Gathering, cooking for up to 350 people for 5 days:

Expected Income

100 people for 1 day x £3.50 a day = £350
200 people for 2 days x £3.50 a day = £1400
250 people for 2 days x £3.50 a day = £1750
= £3500 available

Expected Outgoings

Dried food order: £1300
Bread: £350
Veg: £1000
Gas: £150
Transport: £250
Other (shop/equipment etc) £350
= £3400

Travelling to an event, make sure you have enough cash with you, or cheques, to pay for things upfront such as deliveries, petrol, last minute shopping. If you want to figure whether you're losing money on an event or not, keep a written record of all money taken, and all money spent. Also take it into account whether you have leftovers at the end that will keep until your next event (keep a record of your leftovers to consider when you next order too).

We usually have one person 'in charge' of the money during an event, who takes and pays out money, and keeps the cash (you might well end up with bundles and bundles of cash... lock it up somewhere safe, and don't just keep it all in a bum bag and then get drunk and lose it... eh-hem).

There's different options for taking money. You can give away food. You can just ask for donations. You can charge set prices for different items, drinks, meals. You can charge for the whole day i.e. breakfast, lunch, dinner, drinks, selling meal vouchers/tickets or taking the money on entry to an event. You can arrange food costs to be covered by the ticket price of an event. You can sell meal tickets for individual meals. There's lots of options here and you may try one and figure it didn't work... We'll often just do food by donations at one day events, or at demonstrations and the like. This can work out fine, and we cover our costs, but we find that cooking over a number of days, people stop giving you donations cos they spent all their money on beer. We also don't particularly like handling cash while serving food, fiddling for change etc., so we sell meal tickets when we can, and have a 'ticket checker' in the dinner queue. This also helps knowing how many we're cooking for. As mentioned earlier, we'll either sell them ourselves from the kitchen but preferably get the event organisers to sell them from a central reception type place. Leave clear instructions with them, and count the tickets that you give them so that if they mess up the tally you can still just count the tickets how many have been sold.

If you do kids' portions you'll want to charge less for them. Bear in mind that some teenage kids eat more than a small horse so if it's self service, you may want to put an age restriction on what counts as a child.

If you're selling food for cash, keep an eye on the cash box/pot/jam jar with your money! Have some change ready as a float, and make a note of what the float was if you want to figure out what you've taken at the end.

If we notice we've made a loss at an event, we'll appeal to the organisers and see if there's any spare cash generated from it floating about that they can stick toward the food. Or explain the situation and ask for donations before people leave. Or, if we recently have made a decent surplus on another event, or we'll be cooking at an event soon at which we can expect to make a surplus, we'll write off the loss. This has worked out okay in the long run for us, but maybe we're just lucky?

RECIPES

Mass catering is obviously different than cooking a meal for yourself and a friend. Also, unfortunately, it doesn't always work to just take a recipe for 4 portions and times it by 20/30/80. Or some things that sound great on paper just become slop when scaled up, or far too expensive, or logistically impossible. Before you decide on what to cook, look at what equipment you have, how much time you'll have for prep, what veg is currently seasonal, or what kind of ingredients you may be able to get cheaper in bulk. Also try to imagine it in a very large pan that needs stirring all the time (might well put you off some very thick sauces...).

Try recipes out at home first, maybe for a bunch of friends or something, before you buy 10kg tofu to make it on a large scale.

For ideas on cooking times, generally bear in mind that a large pan of water will take fucken ages to get to the boil. Especially if you've got a crappy burner. You'll get to know your equipment over time, and how long things will take, but before you know this, calculate at least 3 hours to prepare a meal for 150–300, and get water onto the boil as soon as you feasibly can. If you have a spare pan, it might be good to get water boiling in it to add later to another pan in which you've been frying up veg. For example, potatoes usually boil in 20 minutes. But 50kg potatoes will take much longer – first you need to bring a huge pan of water to the boil, then the actual cooking will take longer too, so it'll be more like 1 1/2 hours altogether.

I don't really want to prescribe amounts here for herbs and spices here. Add spices generously but bit by bit and taste test as much as you like. Other things that can 'add flavour' that you might want to experiment with include: marmite/yeast extract, mustard (good in lots of soups), stock powder, thickening the whole thing with some cornflour mixed to a paste with water (add while boiling) or other thickening tactics, wine, sugar (kind of like a flavour enhancer – but beware of using too much and just making it sweet), fresh herbs, soysauce, concentrated apple juice, bay leaves, tomato puree...

A good way of testing what something needs is to get out a small bowl, mix in what you're considering adding and then tasting it – before you just dump a kilo of something into the whole thing.

We usually end up with 6 people standing round the big pan 5 minutes before we should be serving arguing over what else the sauce needs...

You may need to be flexible if you end up with left-overs that need using up. This means either unused leftover veg, or prepared food that's okay to keep—either kept cool, or used very soon and reheated well. Things that won't keep seem to be currys, dressed salads, and anything that keeps the heat too well or involves rice. Leftovers can often be used to bulk out what you're cooking (shh don't tell anyone we said that. We never do that, of course).

Stirring/burning things

Large quantities of food in a pan will burn much, much easier than what you're used to, due to weight. Try to use pans with smooth heavy bottoms for anything that's not just water/really liquidy. Anytime you start sautéing, be there stirring, always right down from the bottom up and evenly all around. Turn down the heat as soon as things start sizzling, and turn up again only when you add liquid, which you should do as soon as things start sticking on the bottom – if you can anticipate it, right before that happens is best. Until it gets boiling, you'll need to carry on stirring at least occasionally (also depending on how thick it is), your food might be sat at the bottom and start to burn. Once something's vigorously boiling, you'll need to stir a lot less. If the bad thing does happen and it starts to burn, swear a lot, and stop scraping the bottom because you'll mix the burnt bits throughout the food and it will all just taste burnt. If it's nearly ready, just turn it off, or if you can transfer it to a new pan, do that, but leave out the burnt bit.

If a recipe calls for veg and pulses to be cooked in a sauce, or if that's how you usually do it, you may want to consider, if logistically possible, cooking the veg and definitely the pulses separately in boiling water (and stirring once in a while!), then draining and adding them to the sauce. It will take less time to cook, and your sauce won't be as heavy and as likely to burn.

Take turns stirring if you can, it can be tiring and hot, and you don't want to slack on it, cos burnt stuff is a bastard. And washing up burnt pans is also a bastard. Get soapy water in as soon as you can and leave it to soak, clean as much out as you can normally then get the burnt bits with a wire scourer, trying to use it gently, because it will scratch up your pan and lead to more potential burning.

Amounts needed per person

This is a guideline to use when ordering food/figuring how much you need of something. When in doubt, round it up.

Muesli: 50g per person per day

Soymilk: 0,2l per person per day

Bread: a bit less than 200g per person per day, 20 large (800g) loaves will feed just under 200 people at one meal

Sugar: ca 1kg per 100 people per day for teas and coffees

Margarine: ca. 1kg per 100 people per day for breakfast/bread with lunch

Grains: 60-100g per person per meal

Couscous/bulgur: 5kg will do 60–80 people per meal

Pasta: 125g per person per meal

Dried beans: 80-100g per person per meal

Main dish: up to 0,4l per person per meal

Veg in a main meal: 250g per person per meal (so, if it's mainly potatoes and carrots – say 150g potatoes plus 100g carrots per person)

Tomato puree: 35x 200g double concentrate tubes for a sauce for 200 – or, large size catering tins (usually 900g) – 4x for a sauce for 100. A bit less if you're using chopped tomatoes too.

Lettuce: 1 iceberg for 10 portions of green salad, a bit less for other lettuces

Cabbage: 50g per person per portion of cabbage salad or cabbage side dish

Cucumber: 1 cucumber will make a salad for 6–8 people
Vegan sausages: 10kg sosmix will make ca 400 sausages (not huge ones)
Bouillion/stock: about one large tin (900g) for a soup for 200/250
Dressing: 1 litre vinaigrette dressing for a salad for 100 people (more if a potato/bean salad)
Fruit: if budget allows or we've been asked to, we'll have fruit with lunch or dinner, usually asking people to just take one piece. Apples often come in 18kg boxes (100–150 pieces), Bananas also 18kg (average – 120 pieces), oranges 15kg (average – 65 pieces)

Terms used in recipes

saute: gently frying veg in some oil while stirring – usually use enough oil to cover the bottom of the pan. Always sauté as long as you can i.e. as long as the veg isn't sticking to the bottom, or going brown – this brings out flavour.

fry: really fry, in lotsa oil.

steam: either with a steamer/large colander fitted over a pan with boiling water and a lid on, or straight in a pan with the bare minimum of water and the lid on the pan.

Breakfast

We usually do a self service breakfast. A selection of different cereals with milk and sugar put out is nice – e.g. a muesli, a crunchy muesli, cornflakes, plus dried fruit or fresh fruit. Some cereal mixes and cornflakes are not vegan. Bread, on boards with breadknives, margarine, jams, peanut butter, marmite, homemade spreads are nice too. If you can put out a toaster, people will appreciate it. And of course, teas and coffee should be put out too.

If you have the facility to do this, people will love you if you fry them veggie sausages, mushrooms, tomatoes, cook scrambled tofu, and heat up baked beans for them. If you can be arsed. Cash and carries usually have large tins of baked beans.

Scrambled tofu: Saute a bit of onion, and some garlic if you like, and then add tofu you've squeezed water out of and mashed up with a fork, plus salt and pepper, and maybe some herbs like chives. Adding a small bit of turmeric will make it go yellow and resemble scrambled eggs. Also nice to add is some nutritional yeast (Engevita) and/or soysauce/tamari.

Yeast Spread: A basic, easy spread involves fresh bakers yeast. Saute a fair bit of onion, and a bit of garlic. Then crumble the bakers yeast and add it to the pan, along with some salt and pepper, and lots of chopped parsley, stirring all the time. It will go all gooey. This one won't keep for very long so use as soon as possible.

Bean Spread: Good for using up leftover beans. Mash them up with some liquid and a dash of olive oil, and mix in whatever you like: some sauted finely chopped onion, garlic, herbs, salt and pepper, grated carrot, other finely chopped veg, either raw or sauted (with the onions).

Hummus: Much, much easier made with a blender – just chuck all the ingredients in and blend, adding more water if it needs it- but you can also mash it by hand. For 100 portions, soak (overnight), drain, and cook 9kg chickpeas in enough water to cover plus a bit. Simmer for at least an hour. Leave to cool before you mix the other ingredients in. Then get a big mixing bowl, and mash chickpeas with up to 2 handfuls of salt, 3kg tahini, up to a litre of lemon juice – fresher is nicer, but you will need to juice fuckloads of lemons – 2–3 bulbs of garlic, minced,

some pepper, and up to 400ml olive oil. Add water gradually as you're mashing to end up with a decent consistency. Some finely chopped onion or fresh herbs can be nice too.

'Fake mincemeat spread' this is a weird German recipe but it works well and makes for an interesting sandwich or roll filling: to make enough for 15, grind 8 ricecakes, either by hitting them a lot, or in a food processor (that works better). mix with a little bit of warm water til it's stuck together. Chop 2 small onions finely, mince 2 cloves of garlic, chop 10–12 black olives, then mix together with the ricecakes, add 3–4 teaspoons marmite, 2 tablespoons oil, 2 tablespoons tomato puree, herb salt, and salt and pepper.

Porridge: Use rolled porridge oats, and put in 2 1/2 times liquid (volume wise) – either water, soymilk, or a combination, add a bit of salt, and heat it up, stirring all the while, and simmer for about 5 minutes. Put milk, cinnamon and sugar out with it when serving. On a very large scale, heat the water/milk first, then stir it in to the porridge and either leave to stand, covered for 5–10 minutes, or gently heat stirring a lot. Whatever you do the pan will be an arse to wash up—make sure you soak it immediately.

Soymilk

Oh the joys of making your own soymilk... It does make sense, because it avoids all the excessive packaging of one litre packets of soymilk, it can be hard to actually obtain 120 litres of soymilk, is cheaper, and generally more economical. You will need a spare pan to use for over an hour though, and the grinding of the beans might take quite a while... Once we stayed up til 2am or so making soymilk and were pretty fed up by the end of it...

1kg dried soybeans will make about 5–7 litres soymilk. Soak the beans overnight, then grind or mince them, either by hand in a mincer, or—much better—in some electrical mincer, or even a food processor. Add them to about the amount of boiling water your beans should yield in soymilk, and boil for about half an hour. When it comes to the boil, it might all go crazy so keep an eye on it, and you may need to quickly add some cold water. Strain through a large colander or similar item lined with muslin and cool as well as you can.

After straining, you'll be left with lots of ground beans. Rampenplan call this stuff Okara (I have no idea if they made up this name or it's real?) and it is then used as the magic bulking out ingredient... You can make burgers from it, use it in soups and suaces, I'm sure you could make an okay bread spread out of it too...

Fresh soymilk will keep for less than a day in hot weather, a bit longer if you have the luxury of refrigeration. If not, keep it in an insulated urn if you can. We've made it the night before and it has then been okay for breakfast and lunch. It seems to go off if there's a storm, for some reason.

Pasta

– amount: usually about 125g per person.

Cooking pasta on a large scale can potentially turn into one big solid mushy lump, so: boil up lots of water. Get ready by opening all the packets you're using, throw them all in when it's really boiling – if you have a lid for the pan, put it on then, to get it back to the boil as soon as possible. Add salt to help it boil and not stick. Then, as soon as they're 'al dente' i.e. not

soft but edible, turn the burner off and start scooping the pasta out as quickly as possible with a large slotted spoon — you can sometimes get large ones at Asian food shops — into a separate container. You'll need someone there stirring oil (and more salt if you want) into it, to prevent it from sticking. It is also a good idea to be rinsing the pasta while you drain it with cold water to stop it cooking further and to wash all the starch off. This is especially important if you'll be using the pasta in a salad.

Hopefully it doesn't turn into one big gooey lump then. The shell shaped pasta, as well as the tube pasta, basically any pasta that potentially traps hot water inside it, can be tricky to use.

Ideas for pasta:

Bolognese sauce for 200: Saute up to 10kg chopped onion with enough oil (5mm is a good amount) to cover the bottom of the pan, add lots of minced garlic after a while (about 6 bulbs), and maybe some celery (not more than 5 bunches — it gets overwhelming), carrots, courgettes, peppers... all chopped fairly finely. Keep sweating over a low heat as long as you can — stirring well! As soon as it starts sticking be ready with chopped tomatoes — if you're using big 2.5 kg tins you'll need about 8–10. Add veg mince — ca 5kg (dried weight) of the MINCE, not the chunks — or red or brown lentils, up to 10kg — at this point too. Add liquid — water or red wine, mmh — if needed to just about cover the veg and mince and make stirring without burning possible, but make sure you don't add too much. Mix in some tomato puree to thicken it up — 4-6kg. Add herbs like oregano and basil (it can take a LOT of both of these), some thyme/marjoram if you like, paprika, salt, pepper, and sugar — a bit of sugar's good to add to tomato stuff cos it takes off their sourness. Bring this to a boil then turn down and cook at least 30 minutes, til done, add more herbs and fresh herbs like a bit of parsley (not too much), basil, oregano, if you have them, toward the end.

Veg tomato sauce for 200: Kind of the same as the above, but with more veg instead of mince. Use the calculation of 250g veg per person for this. Use veg like chopped onion, celery, carrot, quartered mushrooms, sliced peppers, broccoli separated into bits with the stalks chopped up finer, even root veg like chopped parsnip, sweet potato, squash, potatoes. If you want to use things like spring greens or spinach, add them later on when you have the whole sauce boiling. You can also use some beans in this — less than 10kg, and use 5-10kg less veg, and either cook soaked beans separately and add toward the end, or use tinned beans — soaked beans will take ages to cook in the sauce.

Creamy vegetable sauce for 100 no. 1: Saute 5kg onion in a fair bit of oil, and add say 5 bulbs garlic, and a bit of other finely chopped veg you decide to use — e.g. celery/carrot. The following needs a lot of attention, so, attention! Slowly add about a third to half of a bag of flour and mix it in immediately so that it starts going all gooey down in your pan. Then have some stock ready — made separately with boiled water — to add bit by bit, alternating with some soymilk. Keep stir- ring, and stop adding liquid if it's getting too thin. Bring to the boil, and you may be able to add some more liquid then. Add some bay leaves — ca 10, some salt and pepper, and maybe some herbs, and a bit of nutmeg is nice. Then, you could either be steaming some veg in a separate pan then adding it toward the end, or adding veg to the sauce to cook in it. Some nuts are nice in this too, like chopped cashews or hazelnuts.

Creamy vegetable sauce for 100 no. 2: Cook a whole load of spinach – 5–6 large bags of frozen spinach or up to 4kg shredded fresh (you’ll need to spend a lot of time washing the spinach though). Steam it with as little as water as won’t burn, and as short as needed, mixing in 4–5 bulbs chopped garlic. Mix in a large bowl with a fork and/or masher/anything that’ll mash, with 5-8kg tofu, and as much basil as you can afford – at least 4 big bunches. If you have a food processor, do it in that. Then saute 5kg chopped onion, adding up to 5 more bulbs of chopped garlic, 2kg quartered mushrooms, and then make a roux again (like above) with flour adding soymilk/stock and nutmeg. Mix in the tofu/spinach mash when done, taste test for salt and pepper and nutmeg, and serve.

Olive oil and pesto/olives/capers: this needs a LOT of olive oil to be tasty, so it could become quite expensive for over 100 people, but it’s very easy to make. It’s basically slowly cooking a bit of chopped onion, but mostly garlic in a whole load of olive oil, then mixing this into pasta with salt, pepper, fresh herbs like basil, chopped black olives and capers.

Vegan Pesto: Best made with a food processor. Lotsa fresh basil, toasted pine nuts (pooossh) or toasted walnuts, sunflower seeds, other nuts/seeds..., olive oil, salt and pepper and go whizz. You can add a bit more oil bit by bit if you like, while it’s going. Other fresh herbs are nice too, like parsley, fennel, mixed... This is one to experiment with, but can turn out really really nice. Worth it if you can afford all that olive oil.

Genovese for 100: This involves cooking things separately, so only really good for 100 or less on a decent burner with a few rings, while boiling the pasta water on a separate stronger burner if available... Cook 5kg small new potatoes until just done. Scoop out, and cool, then chop into cubes. Cook 6-7kg penne or fusilli until just about done, scoop out and drain, mixing in olive oil and salt and pepper. Steam 6-7kg green beans cut into 5cm lengths (frozen ones are ok), drain. Mix all together with a kilo of pesto, garnish with basil.

Pasta bakes are possible if you aren’t cooking for too many, and you have a big oven. You can usually fit four to six large (ca. 40cmx20cm) baking trays in a large oven – with each baking tray yielding about 10 portions. Don’t start stacking trays on top of each other, it just doesn’t work, cos the heat goes down then. There’s loads of recipes about for these, so I’m just giving you my favourite one:

Aubergine and tomato pasta bake for 50: Saute 8 large chopped onions (ca. 2kg), then add 4 bulbs of garlic, and two handfuls of dried basil. If you have a lid, cover this for a while, stirring occasionally. Cut up to 8 large aubergines lengthwise into quarters and slice, add them to the onion along with 10 sliced peppers, and 3 large (2.5kg) tins of chopped tomatoes – or a mix of tins and fresh tomatoes. Cook for a while, add a dash of sugar and some oregano (less than a handful) if you wish. Separately, cook 1.5-2kg pasta twists (e.g. fusilli) until just about done. Mix in to the sauce, along with some tomato puree (about 2x900g) and a bit of stock, taste for salt needed. You can add some black pitted olives if you like. Bake at 200 degrees/gas 6 for about 1/2 hour.

Grains/The Stodge Part Of a Meal

We often use **Couscous or bulghur**, because it’s easier logistically – all you need is a pan with a lid and some hot water, but no extra burner, to cook these. Unfortunately people who are wheat intolerant or allergic are unhappy with this.

If you can avoid it don't put too much of either in a pan to soak at a time, because the top ends up crushing the bottom and it goes all mushy (we use the army Dixie pans, and do about 3-4kg at a time. Before pouring water on, you can mix in some dried herbs, spices, sultanas, boullion, olive oil, tinned chickpeas, lemon juice... Pour water on until it's completely covered the grains with about a centimetre or more over, stir through and get a lid on, and leave it, stirring occasionally, for 5-15 minutes and checking if it's too dry and needing more water.

Rice –amount: ca. 80g per person. It can be hard to get right – i.e. it's easily overcooked, burnt, and you end up with a pan that's a bastard to clean. Brown long grain rice is the easiest to not fuck up. Again, boil plenty of water (more than you'll need), cook and before it's too soft, start scooping it out, draining well. Remember to add salt when it's boiling to help it along, or add other spices either before cooking, fried up separate and mixed in, or mixed in when draining – cooked rice can easily taste of nothing but hot water. If you have an oven handy that it will fit in, it's nice to 'dry out' rice cooked like this in there, covered, for up to half an hour, at least at 170 degrees/gas 3.

Wholewheat, oat, buckwheat, barley are all things we never cook, but hey, could be good. You cook them like you'd cook beans – soaking, scooping out, boiling up in new water and simmering.

Quinoa is some new fangled popular health food we haven't tried yet. Apparently you should wash it before using (otherwise it's bitter), and boil and cook 15 minutes, then leave the lid on and steam off the heat another 5.

Boiled Potatoes/Mash – amount 250g – a bit more for mash – per person. They're both very good instead of a grain with some dishes. Boil up plenty of water, wash your spuds well (if well washed and with brown bits cut out you don't really need to peel them – peeling spuds is Bourgeois) Chop into small chunks for mash, large chunks to boil. Again, watch for when they're just about done, and scoop out quickly into a separate container, with someone there mixing in some margarine, salt, pepper, chopped herbs, ...

If mashing, well, have fun, it does get there eventually. Try to use more marge than soy milk, unless you can heat up the soy milk before mixing it in (it cools it down a lot).

Soups

Soups can be great. They can be filling, have lots of good nutrition in them, and they're not so hard to make – we often do soups for lunch, served with decent bread, because we usually have less time to do lunch compared to dinner, and we can also save ourselves washing up other pans... Experiment with soup recipes you find. These are ones we often use. Sauteing veg at the start for as long as you can really gets flavour into the soup. Adding some 'garnish' to a soup when serving makes it seem nicer instantly, like chopped herbs (parsley/coriander/chives) or sprigs (rosemary/thyme/mint), toasted seeds, a 'swirl' of vegan yoghurt, a dusting of paprika, croutons if you make them (see recipe later)...

A lot of soup recipes call for the soup to be liquidised. This is quite hard to do properly with 50 litres of soup, unless you have a giant industrial blender which costs about £500. We use soup recipes that don't need to be finely pureed to be nice. Though if we're making smaller amounts, say soup for under 100, we may blend some or all of the soup, but even then, it's not 'pureed'. So if you're looking around for other recipes, bear this in mind.

Emergency thickening: mix up some cornflour with water to a paste and stir into a boiling soup to help it thicken a bit. Or use arrowroot (2 tablespoons to 1 ½ tablespoons water), or knead equal amounts flour and water together and crumble this into the soup. If the soup's too thin and you still have enough time, adding some red lentils, if compatible, will absorb a lot of water (they'll cook in 30 minutes).

Stock: If you have a spare pan, it's really nice to make your own stock. Look at recipes for stock, or re-use water you've cooked veg in and add some things like fresh herbs/bayleaves/marmite, or boil up a bunch of water with a few whole veg in it like carrots, lots of onions, garlic cloves, celery/celeriac, a bunch of fresh herbs (e.g. 'bouquet garni' with thyme, bayleaves, parsley), then scoop out all that after a bit or strain the whole thing. You'll usually need about 20–25 litres for 100 people.

If you're buying stockcubes or boullion, go for an organic one – so much better, and no monosodium glutamate/E numbers etc. Some aren't vegan, and some have nuts in them – avoid if you can, cos it fucks the whole soup up for nut allergic people. We sometimes use the 1kg pots of Marigold boullion, but some aren't vegan and those that are often have nuts in them. We like Vecon which you can get in 1kg pots, it's a darker, saltier stock, and a bit more 'meaty'. Stockcubes are a really big pain when you have to use 30 little individually wrapped cubes. Remember that boullion and stock will have salt in them, so don't overdo it adding more salt – tastetest.

All Soup Recipes for 100

Potato based soups: There's loads of variations you can do with this. Saute up to 8kg chopped onions, add 5–6 bulbs minced garlic (optional). Have the heat fairly low, and enough oil in, then add altogether up to 20kg chopped veg, mostly potato. You can also use combinations of: carrot, finely chopped celery, sliced leeks, shredded greens, chopped turnip/parsnip/other root veg, chopped herbs. For leek and potato soup, use 15kg potato and 5kg leeks. For watercress and/or spinach soup, use 16–18kg potatoes, and add 8–10 large bunches/bags of greens when the soup's boiled and the spuds are nearly done.

Add water or stock (also use a bit of white wine if you're posh! mmh), enough to just cover the veg. You can still add more later if it's too thick and nearly burning, but you might not be able to thicken it, so be careful. Bring to the boil, then simmer until the potato starts breaking down when you're stirring. Stir a lot, pressing the potatoes up against the sides of the pan to break them down. Carry on cooking even after it's done, so it breaks down as much as possible. Taste test adding salt and pepper, and maybe some Dijon or wholegrain mustard and fresh chopped herbs.

Lentil soup: Saute up to 10kg chopped onion, 2–3 finely chopped bunches of celery and/or a bit of finely chopped carrot, and even a few potatoes (chopped small) to help thicken the soup later. Add either 3.5 kg red lentils, ca. 20 litres water or stock, and later, when the lentils are cooked, up to 10kg chopped tomatoes (4 large 2.5kg tins), OR up to 6kg red lentils, about 25 litres water or stock (enough to cover). Add bayleaves and maybe herbs like thyme, basil, rosemary, sage. Bring back to the boil, simmer for 20–30 minutes, longer if it needs to break down more. Stir a lot. Add salt, pepper, and up to 1/3 litre of lemon juice at the end (more if you're using real lemons) and maybe some parsley.

You can also add a more interesting flavour to it if you fry up some very finely chopped onion with garlic and cumin, separately, then mix this in. Don't put in too many herbs though if you're doing this.

Another alternative is lentil and miso soup – cook the soup with some grated carrot in it, then add 2–3 large packs of miso bit by bit while it's boiling (mix in well).

'German lentil soup': Saute up to 10kg chopped onion, 2–3 finely chopped bunches of celery, then add some garlic (4–5 bulbs), up to 4kg of chopped carrot and up to 8kg potato chunks, (do you see a pattern emerging in these soups...?). Stir well and get ca. 25 litres water in before it starts to stick, along with up to 6kg brown or green lentils, a few bayleaves, marjoram, and a stronger stock like Vecon unless you're using homemade stock. Bring to the boil and then simmer. It's really nice, if you can, to separately fry up a bunch of veggie sausages (50/60 will do for a soup for 100 if they're fairly big), then chop them up and stir into the soup at the end. Tastetest with salt and pepper. This is nice with a bit of fresh parsley (not more than 3 bunches) and some fresh marjoram if you get any.

Carrot and coriander: Well, kind of the same again: sauté up to 10kg chopped onion, celery, garlic – if you like, you can add a little bit of ground coriander or ginger too – then add 15–20kg chopped carrots (maybe some potatoes too) and water/stock and bring to the boil. Use a lighter stock for this one. Simmer, stir a lot so it breaks down, and then add salt, pepper and 4–5 bunches of chopped coriander with the toughest of the stalks taken off (bit of a fiddly job). You can also add some grated carrot to thicken it more. It can be nice to mix in a bit of soy cream at the end, but don't let it boil after adding. Or serve the soup with a 'swirl' of soy cream.

Minestrone: Soak 5–6kg haricot or cannellini or borlotti beans overnight. Bring a large pan of water to the boil, and cook the drained soaked beans until done. Saute 8kg chopped onion, then add 6–8 kg diced potato, 6–8kg diced carrot, 2–3 bunches of sliced celery, other veg if you like such as some chopped cabbage leaves or greens or chopped courgettes, and 5 bulbs minced garlic. Saute until just before starting to stick, at least 5 minutes, then add 10kg chopped tomatoes – fresh is nice, but tins are okay too, or half and half. Also add about 20 litres water or stock, and some fresh herbs like bayleaves, parsley stalks, thyme sprigs, rosemary sprigs (if you want to tie them together like a 'bouquet garni' DON'T use plastic string, or rubber bands, or anything else that'll melt!). If you want you can also add some green beans here – if using frozen ones, add later on with the beans. Bring to the boil and simmer til veg is cooked. Now add the beans, and pasta – use 3–5 kg macaroni or other small pasta. It'll cook pretty quickly once it's boiling again, so check it often. Tastetest with salt, pepper, and a bit of sugar if it's too tomato-sour, and stir in some fresh basil if you have.

Veg and coconut soup: A chunky root veg soup with creamed coconut stirred in toward the end is lovely. Here's an interesting recipe. Saute 7kg chopped onion, add up to 20 kg cubed veg – any combination of potatoes, carrots, sweet potato, swede, pumpkin, squash, turnip, , and add one or two large handfuls marjoram, a handful each of ground ginger and cinnamon. Saute as long as you can, then add 7–8 bunches of spring onion, chopped (both the green and white bits), 30 litres stock (or until the veg is covered, but not much higher than that), 200g flaked almonds or more if you have, some finely chopped fresh chilis – say 10–12 small ones, and a large handful sugar. Bring to the boil then simmer til veg is done. Grate or generally chop up 2.5–3kg creamed coconut (a bastard job), stir in until dissolved, then serve with lots of fresh coriander (6–10 bunches).

Sweetcorn and coconut soup: Easy if you have access to frozen sweetcorn, less viable otherwise. Saute about 8kg finely chopped onion for a few minutes, then add a 6kg box of finely chopped red peppers, maybe a few kilos of finely diced carrots, and up to 5 bulbs of minced garlic, stir for a few minutes, then add 1 large root of grated ginger, or a large handful of powdered ginger, and if you want a spicier soup, add about 10 finely chopped red chilis (don't touch your eyes!!). Add about 20 litres water and bring to the boil. Add 5-6kg frozen sweetcorn, and 2.5-3kg chopped creamed coconut (wholefood distributors will often sell creamed coconut in large blocks of 2–2.5kg), and salt and pepper. Bring back to a gentle boil and then simmer for a little while longer until the coconut is dissolved and the sweetcorn is cooked.

Courgette and tarragon soup: A nice one for the summer when courgettes are abundant. Saute up to 10kg chopped onion with 2–3 finely chopped bunches of celery and a bit of finely chopped carrot, and maybe a handful of dried tarragon. Then add up to 15 kg courgettes chopped into chunks. Saute as long as you can, then add 20–30 litres stock or until the veg's covered. Boil, then simmer until cooked. If you can, scoop up some (up to half of it) out and mash or blend, then return to the pan. Add lots of fresh tarragon and serve.

Other nice soups easily done in bulk – check out recipe books: Veg (especially squash) and peanut soup, Broccoli/cauliflower soup with flaked almonds garnish, Corn chowder, Butterbean and tomato, a dhal type soup, Lentil and veg soup,

Or try chilled soups like Gazpacho or Cucumber if you have some chilling facilities available. They're nice in summer.

Soups that suck to make in bulk are any of the ones that involve roasting veg first – the veg shrinks away and you need absolutely tons. Mushroom soup can be done for up to 40 then forget it, unless you're very big and clever. Borscht – beetroot soup – is lovely but you will spend 7 hours peeling beetroots. Same goes for Jerusalem artichokes. Clear soups are unsatisfying as a meal in themselves, and miso soups get pretty expensive.

Croutons: You can either make them in a flat frying pan or in the oven. Use slices of day old bread, cut off crusts, and then cut into cubes. Fry in a bit of olive oil or a mix of olive oil and sunflower on medium heat in a frying pan, turning all the times with a fishslice, and sprinkle with things like herb salt or other herbs, or sauté a few bits of garlic in the oil first to get a garlic flavour. Or grease a flat baking sheet and put in the oven on medium heat, turn them a couple times and keep a close eye on them.

More Main Dishes and Sauces

These are some of our staple dishes all suitable for cooking with basic large scale equipment for large numbers. Occasionally, and depending on the scale of the event, equipment available, and the budget, we'll vary from this, e.g. making bakes, buffets, fancy things, new recipes...

Currys: There's lots of different curries you can make (check out any Indian cookbook for inspiration, or try Thai ones). They can have a base of tomato, just spices and stock, or coconut, and have any combination of veg, fruit (apples!), pulses and nuts in them. You can use those Pataks curry pastes (some of which aren't vegan—check ingredients) or your own combination of spices. The general idea is that you sauté onion first with spices (or spice paste), in LOTS of oil. Basically, I think you can define curry as food with lots of oil and spices.

Anyway, you then add veg, sautéing for as long as you still can, then water or chopped tomatoes, thickening with creamed coconut, chopped nuts (ground almonds are nice in a korma), cornflour, or tomato puree. If you're adding pulses, soak and cook them separately and mix in toward the end. Use about 40-50g pulses per person, depending on how much veg you're using. We like to serve 1 or 2 currys or a dhal, with couscous or rice or bulghur, plus 1 or 2 salads like cucumber with mint, and/or tomato and red onion, chopped onion with herbs, and pickles – at some cash and carrys and in Asian shops, you can get huge jars of pickles and chutney, well worth it! 3-4 large jars usually are enough for 300 people unless they're very greedy people.

Dhal Nice served with curry, dhal is made either out of yellow split peas, red lentils, or other lentils. Boil up water, then add lentils or peas. The ratio should be about 1 part lentils to 2 parts water. Add chopped onion, turmeric, any whole spices e.g. bay leaves, cinnamon sticks, cloves, cardamom. Stir well until it starts to boil again, but then still carry on stirring regularly. When cooked, fry lots of garlic and cumin, ground coriander, cumin seeds, and/or black mustard seeds separately in oil, and mix this in, including the oil. Adding some fresh chopped coriander, or a bit of fresh lemon juice, is nice too, or a smallish amount of coconut cream (to a red lentil one), let this dissolve on the heat.

Potato Provencale/Bean Provencale It's basically potatoes, or beans and some veg, in a tomato/red wine/olive sauce. We usually serve it with garlic bread and a green salad. Get a large pan of water boiling (for the potatoes or the beans). Saute a lot of onion (amounts for 200: ca. 10kg), add lots of garlic (a large plate full when chopped), and if you like, some finely chopped courgette (not more than 5kg) or carrot (same), or sliced and quartered aubergine (same), or sliced peppers (same) or a combination. Sliced peppers are especially nice with the beans, use a bit more than (6-8kg). Add red wine (2-3 bottles, depending on how much the cooks want to spare), bring to the boil and leave boiling for a few minutes. This makes the actual alcohol evaporate, but the nice wine taste in. Then add chopped tomatoes (4-5 2.5kg tins), and simmer a bit, then start stirring in lots of tomato puree (4 up to 6kg). Add any combination of marjoram, thyme, basil, oregano, rosemary, plus salt, pepper and sugar (not too much). Cook until dark red, stirring all the time. Add pitted black olives (3x 2kg tins – usually available from wholefoods distributors) near the end.

Cook cannellini beans (10-12kg) – you can also use a mix of beans, e.g. butter beans, cannellini, and some flageolet – cook together according to cooking times – or potatoes, chopped into large-ish chunks, separately. Scoop out when done – if the beans boiled up all frothy, rinse them a bit before adding – and mix in to the sauce. Taste again for salt before serving.

Greek Beans: (for 200) Soak 12kg haricot beans overnight and cook until done. Saute beans in lots of olive oil or a mix of olive and sunflower with a lot of garlic (15 bulbs or so) stirring well, for a few minutes. Add up to 30 litres stock (until covered), bay leaves, some sprigs of fresh oregano (tie them together with non-plastic string to fish them out after), 4-5 large tins of tomato puree (it shouldn't be too red altogether), lots of lemon juice—use both fresh and bottled—enough to give you a good whiff of lemon when you sniff it – and some chopped red onion (about 5kg). Simmer, stirring a lot, for as long as you can, up to an hour is good. Then add 2-4kg halved black olives and salt and pepper. This is also good cold. Serve with French stick and a green salad for a simple meal.

Nuts and Beans: (for 250) Soak 15kg black eye beans overnight in nearly twice the volume of water. Scoop out and boil up in enough water to easily cover, when they're done, scoop out, sprinkle a bit of salt over, and mash as much as you can. You're not making a puree or proper

mash, you just want to be breaking it down a bit. Try to keep this warm, or time it so it's done just before the rest of the meal is done. Meanwhile, sauté 15kg chopped onions, add 10 bulbs of garlic, then 20–25 large (2.5kg) tins chopped tomatoes, and 3 large (900g) tins tomato puree. Bring to the boil. When it's cooked a bit, add 8kg chopped mixed nuts, 8 or more chopped bunches of parsley, salt, pepper, a handful of sugar or a bit more, and the mashed up beans. This mixture will be a fucker to stir now, so don't even try to cook it much longer. This is nice served with boiled new potatoes with some margarine and parsley in, or rice, and salads.

Chili: (for 100) you might have your own way of making it – everyone seems to! But here's how I do make it – others in the Teapot make it different... Soak 5kg kidney beans overnight. Scoop out, and bring to the boil in plenty of fresh water, turn down and cook until done – scoop out while rinsing if you can, and keep ready. Saute 5–6kg chopped onion, after a bit, add 8–10 finely chopped chilis (and don't touch your eyes when you chop the chilis! ow!), and spices: small handfuls of paprika, cumin, a bit less coriander, less cayenne pepper, and cinnamon. Herbs like oregano and basil are good too. Stir well, and watch it doesn't stick. Add 6kg sliced mixed peppers before this happens. Be ready with opened tins of chopped tomatoes – 4–5 large (2.5kg) tins. If you have fresh tomatoes, use half the amount of tins, and add ca. 4kg chopped fresh tomatoes. Keep stirring, and add 2–3 large (900g) tins tomato puree. Add 2–3kg grated carrot. Simmer until carrots are soft. Add the beans toward the end, a bit of sugar, taste test for salt and pepper. If you have some dark chocolate (1–2 large bars), break it up or grate it, and add it while it's still cooking – mmmh. Or at least add a bit of cocoa powder.

Apple Hotpot: (for 50) This sounds weird but it's very tasty. It needs a lot of stirring to start with so we haven't actually ever made it for over 100 people. Soak 4.5kg butterbeans overnight, cook until done and when draining, keep the water. Saute about 10–15 sliced onions for a few minutes, then add the same amount of sliced apples and a good handful each of turmeric, allspice/mixed spice, and cinnamon. Stir until well mixed through and the onions are cooking, then add the cooked beans and some of the liquid—until not quite covered. Stir through and simmer for another 15–20 minutes, add salt and pepper and serve with crusty or garlic bread. Also nice served with vegan yoghurt mixed with chopped dried apricot (3x500ml pots plus ca. 150g apricot).

Tip for cooking pulses: if you need to hurry up cooking dried pulses, add a whole chunk of margarine to the beans when boiling. Make sure beans boil vigorously for at least 10 minutes to break down the toxins in some of them. Add some bicarbonate of soda to the cooking water if you want to counter the farting effects. We don't, we enjoy making everyone fart...

Goulash: (for 100) sauté 4–5kg chopped onion, then add about 6kg carrot chunks, and 5kg peeled and cubed parsnips until they start to brown. Add ca. 6kg veg soya chunks (get organic ones if you can), OR use the equivalent amount of fried up veggie burgers chopped into chunks. Also add a large handful paprika, 2–3 large (2.5kg) tins chopped tomatoes and/or some fresh chopped tomatoes, 1–2 large tins of tomato puree, and half the amount of the paprika of caraway seeds. Heat gently, then add some stock (up to 10 litres – much less if you've used cubed burgers) and about 5kg diced potatoes. Bring to the boil, then simmer on a low heat for about half an hour until the veg chunks are done. Season with salt and pepper, then stir in up to 3litres warmed soya cream and a bit of parsley (1–2 chopped bunches, unless you can 'garnish' the servings with this), heat through but don't boil again. Nice with rice, cooked new potatoes, mash, or chunky bread, and salads.

Satay Sauce: this is just to give you the general idea, there are tons of good recipes for satay sauce: sauté onions, garlic, maybe a bit of celery and/or spring onion, fresh chopped chillis, lots of fresh finely chopped ginger for as long as you can, then add a bit of liquid, some chopped tinned tomatoes (not too many), then slowly add lots of peanut butter stirring all the while, until you have a sauce that's still creamy and stirrable but thick enough to not run—try to bring to the boil but if it starts sticking, you're going to have to turn it off. Add some lime or lemon juice and salt and pepper. Cook some veg separately like shredded cabbage, carrots, other root veg, broccoli... Then mix in the sauce (tastetest again—may need more salt). This is a good one to make cheap veg nice with.

Rice and beans: we've never actually done this, but I'd like to sometime – it's from the Food not Bombs cookbook: Saute onion and garlic, add water and beans – kidney/pinto/black, one part beans to two parts rice to five parts water. Add one teaspoon of salt for each gallon of water (hm. what's a gallon?) and let the beans boil for 45 minutes or less if you soaked them beforehand (advisable with most beans). Add long grain brown rice, half a cup of coriander or cumin per gallon, some pepper, and any vegetables if you like, e.g. carrots, onions, dried tomatoes. Cover the pan and bring to the boil again. Stir up from the bottom, then lower heat and continue boiling until all the water is absorbed, or ca. 45 minutes. Don't stir more than once after the rice is in.

Sausages and Burgers: Meals like bangers and mash, with veg like cabbage stew or peas and gravy or cider sauce, or burgers with mash, or in buns with salads, go down really well, but be warned – frying burgers and bangers for hundreds of people gradually gets to you. Use a griddle, brushed with oil, or a wide, flat wok/frying pan on a burner with lots of oil – it'll be greasy but it'll cook a lot better.

For **sausages**, we use vegan sosmix – a 10kg sack makes about 400 medium sized sausages. We mix up a quarter or so of the sack at a time, then add some finely chopped onion, maybe some minced garlic, herbs both dried and fresh (finely chopped parsley for example), a bit of paprika, and whatever else we can think of. Then add cold water stirring the whole while, until it's stuck together but thoroughly moist and stirrable. Leave it to stand for at least 10 minutes. Then start shaping into sausages – this is fucken tedious. Have some flat trays, Tupperware lids, or chopping boards ready to stack them up on. Have a bowl of water next to you to rinse your hands with when they get covered in sosmix. If it's too moist and is just falling apart, mix in some flour. If it's too dry add a bit more water (bit by bit – a tiny amount can make quite a difference!) and leave to stand for a bit again. Fry in batches and keep warm in an oven, or serve as you go.

For **burgers**, either use a burgermix with your own additions, same as with sosmix (chopped fresh coriander is really nice in burgers), maybe also things like some cooked pulses (lentils, or other mashed ones), really finely chopped or grated veg like courgette or carrot – experiment at home! Otherwise, there's a lot of ways of making nice veggie burgers with any kind of pulse, nuts, grains, or vegetables as the main ingredient. To help bind burgermix without eggs, use some grated raw potato. There's a gazillion burger recipes – again, experiment at home! Coating homemade veggie burgers with breadcrumbs then frying them gives them a nice crispy edge. Using a burger shaper – with clingfilm – takes a bit of practise but can make it a lot easier, especially if you've not got a whole army of burger shapers. And you end up with evenly sized burgers.

You might want to do burgers as part of a meal, but if you want to serve it as a bun, with relishes/ketchup/lettuce and other salad/mayo maybe you might want to just give people a burger

and a bun, and put out the other things so people can help themselves – make sure you have enough of everything though, and put things out with tongs/serving spoons.

Korean Glass Noodle Salad: only if you can get a good amount of Korean sweet potato glass-noodles—ask in East Asian foodstores—they come to £2-£3 a packet and sesame oil is pricey too, but one large packet will do 15 or so portions. I've done this for 50 (using one and a half large bottles sesame oil) but never for more. Fry equal amounts of onion, carrot, mushrooms, and green or red peppers separately—I do them all in the same large frying pan/wok one after the other, to keep the flavours. Onion: sliced, fry with salt and pepper until glassy. Carrot: sliced as thin as you can into matchsticks, fry with salt and pepper. Same for peppers. Mushrooms: either spend money and get Shii Take mushrooms—soak them in hot water until they're squidgy and shred finely, or just use normal finely sliced mushrooms, fry in a mix of veg oil and sesame oil with garlic, soysauce and half the amount of soysauce worth of sugar, plus a bit of finely chopped spring onion. You can also add cooked leaf spinach, mixed with finely chopped spring onion, sesame oil and a dash of soysauce. Cook the noodles by seeping them in boiled water for a few minutes, then rinsing them well with cold water. Fry them in the same pan in batches with oil and sesame oil, soysauce and half the amount of soysauce in sugar. Mix everything together by hand adding some more sesame oil if you still have any and toasted sesame seeds. Serve with white rice.

Other meal ideas: sweet and sour veg, stir fries (for under 100), bean stews, chow mein style noodles mixed with fried veg in a bit of sauce, ratatouille on grains, kidney beans and veg in a coconut sauce with lime and coriander, soymince and veg stewed in gravy sauce on mash... Things that don't work well or need to be adapted are very heavy sauces or sauces in which veg and beans need to cook in a heavy sauce (if you want to try it, cook sauce and veg/beans separately); paellas and risottos seem to be difficult to make for over 30 people; things involving a roux, i.e. a creamy sauce with flour—if you want to try it, make a roux separately then mix in to the finished meal; and baked things for over 50 people unless you have some kind of superoven.

Serving Bread

Just a few notes on bread here. You might be wanting to put out bread with breakfast, and/or with soups, or for sandwiches. Find a nice bakery that does organic bread if that's what you'd like, and try and get the largest loaves you can find (usually 800g). If you can get them sliced and bagged up, there are advantages, but also some more waste. You might want to ask for half of the bread to be bagged up so it keeps better. Fresh bread will be okay, stored in bakers' trays in a not too hot place for a few days (possibly up to 3), but if you're cooking over nearly a week, it's best to try and arrange two or three deliveries of bread, unless you've got some means of freezing large quantities of bread.

We usually put bread out, with serrated (not pointy, sharp and child endangering) knives to slice them on a few wooden chopping boards, with margarine and spreads. Here too—if illness is getting a foothold you may want to avoid everyone handling bread and pre-slice it. A bread table needs looking after a bit – it gets really messy! And leaving open jam jars outside attracts bugs and wasps – so make sure they're not left there opened for ages.

If you are handing people slices of bread or sandwiches (for which sliced bread is much, much easier), serve them with tongs or in napkins.

Rolls, for example with soups, are nice too – just make sure you've got enough. It somehow fosters resentment if 120 people get rolls and the last 10 just get slices of bread... you might end up with a bread riot.

Garlic Bread A nice addition to meals like pasta, stews, etc. but you will need an oven, though it doesn't need to be huge cos it's fairly quick and you can do it in batches. An easy way to do it is to take a long baguette, and chop it into 5 equal bits, then halve each bit lengthways and spread with garlic margarine (margarine mixed with crushed garlic, maybe some chopped herbs, and a dash of olive oil). You need about 500g margarine for 50–70 portions (depending on how thick you want to spread it). Layer into baking trays and bake for up to 15 minutes, keep warm in a covered container sat on top of the oven.

This way, you end up with 10 pretty equal portions out of one baguette, and it's much less fiddly serving this than garlic bread sliced through that needs breaking into pieces while serving, possibly resulting in uneven portions which again can cause resentment (garlic bread riot).

Salads

There's no end to the kind of salads you can make, and they don't depend on pans and burners, so if you're limited on what you can cook you can make a meal look better by serving it with two or even more different salads. It's sooo nice to be able to use a food processor to shred and grate. Obviously if you can't, make sure you've got a bunch of decent graters and get lots of volunteers helping...

Here are just some ideas for salads – get inspired by whatever's in season and available, don't be afraid to use fruit, nuts, beans, cooked veg, fresh herbs etc.

- green mixed salad, with different lettuces, red onion slices, cress, avocado chunks, cucumber, seeds, sweetcorn, grated carrot, ...
- cannellini bean salad with vegan yoghurt, a bit of garlic, cucumber, mint and parsley
- grated carrot and sultanas, also with dessicated coconut and shredded red cabbage
- coleslaw – shredded cabbage, white/savoy/and/or red, grated carrot, sultanas, seeds...
- mixed bean salad with red onion, avocado chunks, sweetcorn, apple...
- tomato and red onion and fresh basil (also nice with 'soaked' white bread strips)
- cooked green bean, or broccoli salad with garlic and flaked almonds
- 'chef's salad' with cooked potato, kidney beans, and any other veg like cress, grated carrot, chopped celery, in a mayonnaise/yoghurt dressing
- shredded Chinese cabbage, grated carrot, beansprouts mixed with sesame and olive oil, soysauce, pepper, ginger and some sugar
- tabbouleh – bulghur wheat, lots of fresh parsley and mint, tomatoes and cucumbers, chick-peas

- waldorf salad – celery, apple, seedless grapes, walnuts, cauliflower florets, mayonnaise
- 'salad nicoise' – cooked French bean and potatoes, tomatoes in vinaigrette with finely chopped black olives and capers

Salad ingredients to pick and mix:

- shred/finely slice: broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, endive, leeks, lettuce, peppers, runner beans, watercress
- slice: banana, cooked beetroot or carrot, chicory, cucumber, fennel, orange, pears, tomatoes, red onion
- chop: apple, celery, avocado, nuts, herbs, mooli, pineapple, radishes, spring onions (use both white and green parts).
- grate: raw beetroot (it's a bastard to peel though, so don't get over ambitious), brussel sprouts, carrot, celeriac, onion
- other stuff: cress, nuts, raisins, sultanas, dessicated coconut, grapes, beansprouts, alfalfa, edible flowers, cooked beans, potatoes, croutons...

Lettuce: there's lots of different kinds – when ordering veg, talk to the supplier about what kinds they've got at the moment, and get a nice mix. Wash them well – some vinegar in the water will help crisp them up, as well as drawing out pesticides. If they're organic, watch out for baby slugs hidden in the folds... Dry well – a large, decent salad spinner is a great investment for this, otherwise shake a handful of leaves a lot and cover yourself in water. You can also have lots of fun washing and shaking lettuce in a shopping trolley with a hose! (This actually works quite well)

Salad dressings: Make dressings in large jars with lids, or in large jugs. Always shake up/stir well before using. Unless it's a bean or potato salad, don't add dressing until the last minute because it will go soggy sat there dressed. We serve salad in large Tupperware boxes with lids to keep them covered until needed, then just before serving dress the first box, get the lid on and shake it through, and then do the second one when the first is running out, etc.

Vinaigrette: You won't need exactly 10 times as much as you use at home for 10 times the amount of people – basically it goes further in bulk. We'll make about 1 litre of dressing for 50 portions, and about 3 litres for 250. But we're also very stingy. Use 1 part vinegar/lemon juice to 3–5 parts oil. Mix vinegar (cider, white wine, red wine, or balsamic) and/or lemon juice with salt, pepper, and anything else you'd like to add: fresh or dried herbs, mustard (wholegrain or Dijon), minced garlic, a bit of tahini, apple or orange juice (nice!), a bit of vegan mayo (make sure you whisk it in). Add olive oil, sunflower oil, some other oil or a mix slowly, whisking away while you're doing this. If you're using a jar with a lid, screw lid on and shake it all through. If you have a stick blender, stick it in shortly – it'll go nice and creamy.

Mayonnaise dressing for 100–200 (depending on how much you want to smother the salad): Get a 3kg tub of vegan mayo or use homemade mayo – put into a big bowl, and mix in 1–2 500g pots of vegan yoghurt – this makes it altogether less heavy. Add a bit of lemon juice slowly, mixing vigorously the whole time, plus salt, pepper, and maybe chopped fresh herbs (parsley,

dill, mint, tarragon) or minced garlic. You might also want to mix in a bit of sunflower oil, if it's getting too lemon-y. Make sure you wash out and reuse that mayo tub, they're very good for herb storage.

Vegan mayo You can easily make your own vegan mayo, with a decent food processor or stick blender. For nearly a litre, liquidise 100ml lemon juice, 400 ml soymilk, then slowly drizzle about 700ml sunflower or olive oil into it while liquidising. Liquidise for ages, it'll take some time to get thicker. Add salt and pepper, and garlic, fresh or dried herbs, paprika... if you like.

Vegan Salad Cream (for about half a pint) Mix 150ml undiluted concentrated soymilk (comes in half litre cartons) with 150 ml oil, 5 teaspoons brown sugar, and some salt. Beat in 150ml lemon juice with a whisk. You can add spices like paprika, ginger, curry spices, or fresh herbs.

Vegan 1000 Island dressing Mix vegan mayo, ketchup, sugar, lemon juice, and grated dill pickle.

Vegan Caesar dressing To make half a litre, blend 200ml lemon juice, 2 cloves garlic, 2 teaspoons capers, 1 tbsp Dijon mustard, 2 teaspoons engevita (nutritional yeast flakes), a pinch of pepper, and 100ml olive oil in a food processor. Gradually add 200ml sunflower oil, corn oil, or light olive oil, and salt.

Fruity dressing (to make about a litre) Whisk 600ml orange juice, 100ml lemon juice, 150ml apple juice concentrate, 3 teaspoons grated fresh ginger and 1 tsp caraway seeds.

Side Dishes

The more different things people have on a plate, the happier they seem to be. Or they at least think it's a more interesting meal. If you just can't always do this logistically, you can think about making more than one salad, or adding simple sides. Maybe you are able to get the main meal pretty much ready, take a pan off and make a quick side on the burner, then serve it all up.

Nuts (chopped salted peanuts are nice with stirfries/Chinese style things, walnuts, brazilnuts or hazelnuts are nice with almost anything, cashews are nice with curries)

Toasted seeds (get a large wok hot, don't use oil – and bung in seeds like sunflower or pumpkin, stir a lot until they start going brown – you can also mix in some sesame seeds toward the end, but turn it off as soon as they all start popping and flying out. Mixing in some light soysauce or tamari at the end is nice too – don't let them go black though. Spread them out in a tray rather than a bowl – they end up weighing down on each other and sticking if stacked too high. We use 5kg for 250–300)

Bread or garlic bread (even unbaked garlic bread – a slice of nice bread spread with herby garlic margarine) Vegetable side dishes like steamed greens steamed greens (though they have a tendency to go cold within seconds)

Peas (steam frozen ones over whatever you're boiling, in a large colander – use a medium bag for ca. 15 portions)

Boiled carrots (cut into sticks rather than rounds to resemble school dinner less, use plenty margarine, and mix some golden syrup – not too much – and sesame seeds in at the end. Use 5kg for 100 as a side)

Stewed cabbage (finely shredded stewed with a bit of onion in plenty margarine, add some garlic maybe, salt, pepper and seeds like sesame, cumin, or caraway – use 1 large cabbage for 20 small portions)

French beans (steam frozen ones in a colander over whatever's boiling, then mix in margarine, lots of minced garlic, salt, pepper, and maybe some fresh chopped parsley)

Baked Beans (go well with things like bangers and mash – get some large tins from the cash and carry and heat – add some of your own flavourings if you like. Organic beans are of course nicer, the only thing is that they're usually only available in small tins.)

Stewed red cabbage with wine (Shred red cabbage. Saute red onions (1 to each cabbage), and add some diced cooking apples (2 medium sized to each cabbage), add cabbage, red wine (1 bottle for 100), red wine vinegar (until it all smells vinegary), salt, pepper, bayleaves, maybe some juniper berries, and redcurrant jelly (1jar for 30–40 portions). Cover and cook until the cabbage is soft. Use 1 medium sized cabbage for 15 portions as a side.)

Herbed cucumbers (for 50: sauté 8 diced cucumbers and 4 large-ish sliced onions a bit, then add fresh herbs (1–2 bunches), nearly ½ a bottle Tabasco, salt, cover and steam for a while longer, stirring occasionally)

Salsa (lots of different recipes but the general idea is finely chopped veg with some chopped tomato, lime and/or lemon juice, fresh herbs like coriander and fresh chilli—we've even done them with fruit like banana and mango)

Pickles, chutneys, jellies, sauces or dips look in cookbooks (proper ones) and get inspired, or look in the cash and carry for large pots of nice things.

Snacks

e.g. for demos This is stuff you'd prep at home or a kitchen you can use, then pack up and take to where you're going. Things to consider are that you don't want to be giving people plates, unless you don't mind using disposable plates – it should all be stuff that can be eaten just with a napkin. Also, obviously it'll all be cold, needs to be easily transportable, and shouldn't be in danger of going off and manky in the sun. Also, funnily enough, people don't seem to want light, posh food at a demo or action – they want filling stuff, and lots of sugar too. It's nice if you can do tea and coffee especially if it's cold – take an insulated urn, those air pot things, or an electric urn if there's leccy somewhere. Bring savoury things like sandwiches, nut and other savoury slices, pasties, slices of vegan pizza (fine when cold if you used a lot of olive oil), bhajis, samosas, veggie sos rolls or other things in puff pastry cases/rolls, salads in pitas like tabbouleh, potato, bean, falafels, or salads and tahini in tortilla wraps,... People who are wheat intolerant are buggered though.

Vegan Pizza: You need a large oven with good, strong heat for this (or a custom made pizza oven—ooh). A thin base will cook quickly—about 15 minutes—in a hot oven, so you can make them in batches –we've done this over an evening in our social centre as a fundraiser. We've also made pizza, cut it in slices, and taken it stacked in a food box with greaseproof paper between layers to feed hungry demonstrators.

To make the dough, use about 1kg white flour (or strong white flour) for about 35–40 medium sized slices. Make in batches or use a large enough bowl. Add about a tablespoon of salt. If you're using dried active yeast, you can just mix this in, along with a heaped tablespoon of sugar—the amount you need will be noted on the packet. For yeast granules that need activating, boil up some water, dissolve a tablespoon of sugar in it, and mix it with an equal amount of cold water—you'll need nearly two pints altogether, and the water should be lukewarm. Dissolve a couple

tablespoons of the yeast in it, cover and leave to stand in a warmish place for about 10 minutes, until a froth has developed on the top. If this doesn't happen, the water might have been too hot so try again. Then make a dough by adding the yeast mixture and a dash of olive oil bit by bit (or ca. 2 pints lukewarm water if using active yeast), stirring with your hands or with a butterknife (I find this works quite well). It shouldn't be too wet and stick to your hands, or too dry and crumbly, and gradually turn into a dough. Turn it out of the bowl onto a smooth, floured surface and knead for as long as you can be arsed. Push the dough down, fold over, punch down, and repeat, and repeat... Sprinkle a bit of oil into the bowl and return the dough to it, cover with a wet teatowel and put the dough somewhere warm to rise for a couple of hours. The minimum seems to be 1 1/2 hours.

For a good sauce, finely chop 2–3 onions and 1 bulb of garlic, and sauté in a thick bottomed pan. It's lovely if you want to add some red wine then—boil it rapidly for a few minutes which will burn off the alcohol but leave lots of flavour. Add 2–3 small tins of chopped tomatoes and up to 2 tubes tomato puree. Add a dash of sugar, and lots of herbs—basil and oregano are essential, use either large handfuls of dried or finely chopped fresh basil and sprigs of oregano tied with string. Experiment with other herbs over time. I sometimes add marjoram (but I'll add that to anything). Add a bit more water/wine if too thick, bring to the boil then turn down and simmer for as long as possible.

Grease the trays you'll be using (trays with low sides are best, but most trays work fine in a hot oven.) When the dough's risen, knead it and let it rise again for a shorter while. Then tear off a chunk and roll it out with a rolling pin on a smooth floured surface to fit the tray. Pick up the rolled out dough and gently pull it apart with your hands, to stretch it a bit further. If it tears, set it down in the tray and repair it by squidging it back together. Knead the dough up to the edges of the tray, take a tablespoon olive oil and drizzle it over the dough spreading it with the back of the spoon and then spread out a ladleful of tomato sauce. Now add toppings, possible ones for vegan pizzas include: sliced red onion, cooked spinach, sliced peppers, sliced mushrooms, sweetcorn, chopped olives, marinated crumbled tofu, any sliced fake meat veggie product, sautéed sliced aubergine or courgette, broccoli florets, sautéed or roasted sliced leek, thinly sliced, cooked and maybe roasted potatoes (I really like this), tomato slices, fresh herbs, sliced spring onion, ... You can put pretty much anything onto pizza, so experiment! Bake in a very hot oven. They're done when you pick the edges up off the trays without the pizza falling apart. Bear in mind that things take longer to cook if the oven's completely packed, so it may make sense to only do a few at a time but be able to change over more often. If you're serving the pizza cold, make sure the slices are cooled before you pack them away otherwise germs will fester and/or it'll be more likely to go off.

Cakes

There's a lot of recipes for vegan cakes, just look in any vegan cookbook... but the following are the ones that have never failed me, and I think are the most economical.

If you're making one cake, you might as well be making 10 – as long as you have everything you need ready, a decent oven, and enough baking trays. I use loaf tins, or for larger amounts, deep baking trays. Remember to grease them before use, to preheat the oven, and to lick the bowl clean... Cool cakes when you take them out the oven on cooling trays (those bits from grill

pans will do), first cool in the tin, then when you can hold the tin without it feeling hot, take a knife and go round the edges, then turn over as quick as possible and pull off. Turn the cake right side up and cool again for a while, before you put on icing/cut up and put away. To stack cakes in a tray, use greaseproof layers between the layers but only if the icing's properly set.

Vegan Sponge cake: to fill 3 loaf tins, or 1 large deep baking tray

Step 1: Sift 400g self raising flour (for chocolate cake: 50g cocoa + 350g flour), 200g caster sugar. Mix together.

Step 2: mix in 200ml sunflower or veg oil

Step 3: mix separately, then mix in: 300ml soymilk, or 200ml soymilk and 100ml water, 1 teaspoon each bicarbonate of soda and lemon juice or vinegar

Bake at 180–200 degrees (gas mark 5/6) ca. 30 minutes or until a knife stuck in comes out clean.

There's a billion variations – if adding powdery stuff, weigh it off against the flour e.g. 30g ground nuts +370g flour, if it's liquids, weigh it off against the soymilk, e.g 10ml lemon juice + 290ml soymilk), if it's chunky, just mix in.

Variations:

add grated lemon grind in step 1, and more lemon juice in step 3; add chopped dates in step 1 and mashed banana in step 3; add choc chips in choc cake; add ginger in step 1; add grated carrot in step 1 and maybe some desiccated coconut or sultanas in step 3; add rum flavouring to a choc cake in step 3; add tinned pitted cherries after step 1, plus cherry brandy in step 3; add chopped dates and walnuts in step 1; add any combination of dried fruit in step 1; add grated orange rind in step 1 and orange juice in step 3; add nuts, spices...

apple cake: add ½ teaspoon mixed spice in step 1, slice apples finely and arrange on top of poured out dough – it's nice to press the slices in close together, and sprinkle on more mixed spice

marble cake: ½ white dough, ½ choc dough, pour into tin on top of each other and give one gentle stir with a fork

Choc icing: melt plain chocolate in a bowl set in a pan of simmering water (don't let water come up to the sides of the bowl), use immediately, or stir in soy cream bit by bit until it's fudgy.

Choc mock cream: (enough for recipe above) heat ¾ cup caster sugar and 1/3 cup water in a pan, and simmer at least 5 minutes, then cool. Melt 80g dark chocolate in a bowl over simmering water. Beat 125g marger with electric beater until light, pour cooled sugar water in slowly, beating the whole time, then add melted choc, still beating. Cherry brandy or other alcohol is nice in this.

White icing: cream margarine with icing sugar with a fork or electric beater – add flavouring if you wish like desiccated coconut, lemon juice, almond essence.

Caramel icing: Boil up 140g raw cane sugar and 55g marger and 4 tablespoons soymilk until it froths up, simmer for another 3–4 minutes, take off the heat and carry on beating until it gets thicker, add a drop of vanilla essence if you like.

Oat treats: Mix 115g raw cane sugar, 60ml soymilk, and 30g cocoa powder in a pan. Bring to boil while stirring slowly, then simmer for 3 minutes. Chop 30g nuts, plus some raisins if you like. Take pan off heat and stir in chopped nuts, raisins if using, and 170g rolled oats. Form into walnut sized balls, and roll in dessicated coconut, icing sugar, cocoa powder or whatever. Refridgerate for a bit before serving. These don't keep too long in the sun.

Fridge cake: Melt ½ a pack marge, 1 large cup cocoa powder, ca 100ml golden syrup. Off the heat, mix in bit by bit 1 ½ and a half packets crushed digestive biscuits (put them in a plastic bag, hold shut, and pound with a rolling pin). Line a tin with greaseproof paper and squidge into the tin. Refridgerate then serve.

Easy vegan ice cream: This is the one ice cream we've made in bulk, ever. It's a good one to do if you fine yourself with a ton of bananas. You need an empty freezer, and when you take it out you should use it pretty quickly. For 40: Chop up to 5kg bananas and freeze in plastic boxes for 4 hours. Blend in batches with altogether 1.25l soymilk, 750ml sunflower oil, about half a pint lemon juice, and a small bottle of vanilla essence (mix all the liquids, then add bit by bit to the bananas until you have a good consistency). Serve it with hot chocolate sauce

hot chocolate sauce (mmmh!) – for 40- 50: melt 300 marge, add a cup of cornflour, cook for a couple minutes stirring well, add about 300g cocoa powder and the same amount of sugar, continue heating and stirring. Add 4l soymilk or a mix of soymilk and water a little at a time, continue until it's thickened.

FEEDING THE MASSES AT THE G

So, the G8 met in July 2005 in Scotland. The Dissent! mobilisation against it began two years earlier, and it soon became clear that the best way we could contribute was to start thinking about making sure people would get fed. Being two catering groups based within the movement, Veggies and the Anarchist Teapot formed a catering working group and slowly started compiling information, and reaching out to find other mobile kitchens to help cook for the expected 10 000 or whatever random number was being bandied about.

There were ideas of having various convergence centres over the South of Scotland – in Glasgow and Edinburgh, then also a large rural site that would be the main focus for the blockades planned at the start of the summit. We decided we would also mainly focus on the rural site, because people would be much more dependent on kitchens there than in the middle of a city. Another idea that emerged for the rural convergence site was that it would be divided into ‘barrios’ i.e. neighbourhoods, that would be based around affinity, social centres or geography and would be having their own meetings, as well as their own kitchens. Kitchens both from the UK and abroad started committing themselves to come, as well as other groups who said they would be setting up a kitchen for a neighbourhood they were planning (including some people who only came forward when the site was actually set up, which demanded a lot of flexibility on our part – but it worked out fine...)

Thankfully, a London based kitchen, Kaos Café, took on the catering at Glasgow, and the Brighton based Café Clandestino who had previously mostly catered at festies but were up for being involved in this mobilisation came forward and took on Edinburgh. This turned out to be difficult and unpredictable to plan for, due to the hassle of finding an autonomous convergence space in Edinburgh in which people could sleep and be fed in. The Teapot decided we would split our kitchen and come help in Edinburgh for a couple of days around the 2nd and 3rd July, but ended up only going for the one day, helping Café Clandestino at the council’s official campsite in which Dissent! had a space in the end.

An email group was set up to discuss the state of things and sort out decisions between all the kitchens involved, such as whether we should charge for food or ask for donations, who’d be arriving when etc. I reckon it worked okay, though I’m sure everyone got bored of the massive ‘update emails’ the Teapot sent out every few weeks... just thought everyone should know everything going on... got a bit long at times. The main decisions made that were told to everyone joining in later were: all cooked food would be vegan (though non vegan donations received would be put out for people to take), we would charge for food, 50p for breakfast, £1 for a simple meal and £1.50 for a fuller meal, while not turning away anyone who couldn’t afford this, and we would all be putting up money where we could and pooling all takings, and problems with losses or what to do with any potential surplus would be discussed on site before everyone left and shared out as fairly as possible (without anyone making private profit – this was pretty much assumed anyway).

Someone told of how a number of kitchens cooked at the mobilisation in Evian, and that there was a big marquee that acted as a central food storage to which all deliveries came and all donations were brought. We thought that sounded like a good idea for the rural site – if every kitchen were ordering food or sorting supplies for themselves there could be a lot of waste, and combining the efforts sounded much more sensible. The Teapot took on sorting this central food store and ordering in supplies, which turned out to be a bit of a scary task. It involved looking at finances going into the tens of thousands, guessing numbers coming to site as anything between 500 and 6000, and trying to find suppliers that were willing to cope with potential police hassle, potential orders changed at the last minute, and getting us 1000kg of potatoes...

The money thing was especially frightening. On a scale like this, you can't rely on donations or what you can skip, and you also need money for travel (we definitely wanted to help the kitchens coming from abroad with this), gas, equipment... So after a lot of juggling figures we came up with needing about £12000 upfront for all the initial orders and supplies – even after breaking down orders to as many deliveries we could, and getting a few things like tea and coffee on credit – but we actually managed to raise this by borrowing money from lots of different kitchens and some other campaign groups. We didn't have to tap into other parts of the Dissent! mobilisation at all, and managed to pay everyone back at the end – hurra!

I was really happy with the suppliers we ended up with. A local farmer got us staple veg like potatoes (which he told me was all they ever eat in Scotland), onions, and these terrifying gigantic carrots, and an organic distributor got us things like salad vegetables and cabbages. Both of them were friendly, amused by trying to get around the police, gave us good discounts and some free extras, and were genuinely interested in what was going on. We ordered wholefoods like dried beans, margarine etc from Green City in Glasgow, who brought 3 deliveries altogether and were really supportive. When you're in a position of having to spend such large amounts of cash, it's much nicer to give the large amounts of cash to people who aren't complete wankers.

One thing that made the ordering difficult was the fact that the site was opening on Friday the 1st July, and that meant any orders for the Monday, to cover feeding people Monday – Wednesday, had to be placed before the Friday. So, we placed the orders without having any idea how many people would be turning up, or what exactly other kitchens would be cooking with, though we'd asked for order lists a number of times beforehand. (Also, not knowing that we would be getting tons and tons of muesli donated – we literally had a muesli mountain about 10 times the size of me in the end). Unfortunately, we had to cut down on our Monday deliveries with very short notice, including a lot of the veg, which caused problems for the veg suppliers, but we couldn't really do much about that.

Finding bread had been a big ordeal. We weren't fussed about getting organic bread, but we found that, apparently, just normal, properly baked bread isn't very popular in Scotland, they all eat Sunblest and Mothers Pride... About a day before we left, we had finally found a couple of bakeries that seemed to be able to cover our needs – who actually baked bread, with flour, and no chemicals, and could cope with up to 700 loaves a day – again, we had to revise the orders on site. And the first few days, we had a giant bread mountain and people got bread with everything. We even made a bread spreads – to put on bread!

As it happened, the rural site wasn't that rural. In fact, it was next to a Morrisons superstore. It wasn't ideal in a lot of ways but there we were. There were a large number of kitchens, mostly able to cater for 100–300+ people in a neighbourhood: the Belgian Kokkerelen collective; an Irish kitchen combining Bitchen Kitchen and Certain Death Vegan Café; the Scottish Healands kitchen

who were already on site when we arrived who we hadn't heard from beforehand; kitchens from the social centres in Bradford (1in12) and Leeds (Common Place, with some Sheffield people too); Veggies from Nottingham; Why don't you from Newcastle; a kitchen from Lancaster with lots of Danish people for some reason; a Bristol kitchen; a kitchen from Oxford; a kitchen in the Queer Barrio; and Purple Penguin from up North who came and baked all day, making lovely vegan cakes and pastries. The Anarchist Teapot teamed up with Rampenplan to form a huge kitchen (Rampenpot, or the Anarchist Plan) to cater for the neighbourhood-less masses, any overspill from neighbourhoods, as well as the separate People and Planet area. This wasn't something we had intended – P+P were insistent on having their own area, and as far as we were concerned we thought they were then also sorting out their own catering. Quite late in the day we heard they didn't have a kitchen – thankfully, it worked out okay because there were less people than there could've been, meaning we could feed an extra 400 without any problems, on top of the 1000 plus we were feeding as well.

Our kitchen really was huge – we had a row of 9 giant pans, one of which held 350 litres and when I tried to wash it up I would disappear inside it. We also had the central food store at the back of our marquee. Once on site, we decided to have a kitchen delegates meeting every morning after breakfast, to figure out how it's going, who's cooking lunch and whether every kitchen needed to cook everyday, etc. The other kitchens also would come and pick up ingredients and gas from the store; we also all lent various bits and pieces to each other throughout. It took a few days for all of us to find our feet – some of the kitchens that came hadn't had much experience with mass catering in a field, everyone needed to be set up with what they needed, lots of gas splitters were installed and ditches dug and water needed to be connected up, etc, etc... Everyone seemed to get the hang of it pretty quickly though, and soon we had fantastic food all over the site available at different times (with the Healands kitchen often going all night!). I had been worried we would be too dominant with our huge kitchen and food store, and we would be the 'experts' on site, and in some cases I suppose we were, but generally, each kitchen developed its own individual way of doing things and it felt varied and decentralised. As a registered food business with insurance and everything, Veggies had taken on dealing with the local authorities. As a legal site in constant negotiation with the local council, this was an aspect we couldn't ignore. The food hygiene inspection happened fairly early on, and went okay (phew!), with us sat there in a very clean marquee in our aprons waiting for them...

The finances were daunting at first – £15000 spent on food and rising, only £7000 taken over the weekend to pay for it... – but then there was some huge influx of people around the Tuesday, the 5th, the day before the mass blockades, and we all found ourselves cooking and cooking, and getting a lot of the money back... In fact, the Rampenpot made soup three times during the night, as well as gallons of coffee. We still had a lot of bread, so all the kitchens put it out with spreads, as well as nuts, seeds, raisins, bits of fruit or whatever else was there, and little bags for people to make themselves packed lunches to take away with them, seeing as lots of people were off to spend the night in the woods to do actions in the morning. All of this went incredibly fast. People were putting vegan mayo and nowt else on their sandwiches when the other spreads ran out...

As it happened, thousands of people went out, did a whole range of generally successful blockades early in the morning, came back to the site where the kitchens were waiting for them with hot food, and loads of people went straight back out again and on to Gleneagles... basically, cool actions happened, we fed them, and it was good.

After the Wednesday, the police decided they needed to control our movement much more and surrounded the site. This led to a feeling of a state of siege, people started drifting off, and it also led to some comedy attempts to get deliveries of food supplies passed through police lines.

Another thing that started happening around then was that people got ill... Not surprising considering the numbers of people on site and also not surprising that kitchens got blamed for this. The actual reason was the general hygiene, almost certainly overloaded portaloos and a lack of handwashing facilities (a lovely process otherwise known as faecal-oral transmission!) The kitchens were probably the one place people did wash their hands before handling food. Containing the Faecal Oral Transmission (or Dissent!ry) became pretty important so we set up extra handwashes outside each kitchen, and since the kitchens were a place it still could spread further we also changed the washing up system so that it was one or two people doing everyone's washing up, and we pre-sliced bread we served instead of letting everyone handle the loaves to cut it themselves. The lesson here was definitely that kitchens should feel responsible for general hygiene of a site and not just the hygiene in the kitchen, because if it goes wrong, you'll get the blame! The council supplied a whole bunch of alcohol based water free antibacterial handwash. The only thing is though that that stuff doesn't work when exposed to the hot sun. Anyway, we all survived...

Towards the Friday, there definitely was a feeling of activists leaving and idiots with soundsystems replacing them. That wasn't what we'd come to cook for, and in the kitchen meeting most kitchens seemed to be preparing to leave. After a lot of calculations, paying people back and taking tons of change to the bank in a wheelbarrow, we found out we'd made a surplus of about £5000! It was decided that this should go to other parts of the Dissent! mobilisation and the bulk of it to prisoner support, as well as not letting any kitchen be out of pocket. Mugs, plates and bowls that had strayed were taken back to the kitchens they came from, leftovers divvied up... Then it was time to go home...

The people trying to leave the country with the Dutch kitchen equipment got interrogated under the Terrorism Act for ages on the border—with cops asking questions about how food was organised... They went through everything, including individually searching through 1500 stacked cups! They eventually were left to get on the ferry.

From what we heard, the food was appreciated, and the kitchens were a part of all the infrastructure created for the mobilisation that worked well. And one thing that we can already say that came out of it is that we now have a lot more action kitchens in the UK who have the ability and the experience to cook for actions, gathering, and camps.

KITCHEN CONTACTS

Other mobile kitchens—our address is on the back, and Veggies on page 4.

Rampenplan are a mobile kitchen collective based in Holland who have been cooking at mass mobilisations and other events around Europe for more than 20 years. Website: www.antenna.nl/rampenplan/, email: ramp@antenna.nl

Certain Death is a 6 month old vegan cafe in Dublin city, Ireland. We were based in a warehouse but are currently homeless. We prefer to cook indoors but we'll do anything and go anywhere and can cook for up to 300 people. We're contactable at certaindeath@riseup.net.

Food not Bombs was founded in 1980 and recovers food that would otherwise be thrown out and makes fresh hot vegetarian meals that are served in city parks to anyone without restriction. The groups also serve free vegetarian meals at protests and other events. Have also published a Food not Bombs Handbook, with See Sharp Press, which is a handy though US focussed FNB guide with logistics and recipes. PO Box 744, Tucson, AZ 85702-0744, USA, email list: fnbnetwork@lists.riseup.net

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