



FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

The reality about food - especially at a retreat - is that it plays a critical part in attitude shaping of your members. If you provide plenty of food (especially good food), you will alleviate one of the main concerns of your members. Always have back up supplies. Some sites will cook the food for you and that is a nice option in terms of time and logistical coordination. It also can set you up for disaster. If the food is less than desirable then you will be cranky along with the group. The reality is that people start to feel as though they are held hostage if their basic needs are not met. On the flipside, a campground begins to feel like a resort when the food is plentiful and palatable. Remember: "breaking Bread" together brings warmth and family like conversation into the atmosphere and this is a necessary ingredient for an effective retreat

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU PLAN EFFECTIVELY:

Give the retreat goers some control. If you are responsible for the planning, take inventory of the retreat goers needs before the retreat. Send around a food inventory sheet to find out specific needs and desires.

Do a sack lunch swap. This is especially helpful on the first day - when you first arrive at the retreat. Put all of the sack lunches in the middle of the table and have everyone draw numbers to choose a lunch. If your members know in advance they will be packing a lunch for someone else, creativity and fun will follow.

Assign small groups to bring a meal or cook the meal. Involving your members is a great socialization tool that divides the workload, offers you a break, and cultivates a fun atmosphere.

Give the group a bag of ingredients and have them create a meal without a script. Make sure the ingredients are somewhat odd.. It sounds risky and strange but you would be surprised about the creative, team-like outcome.

Use food as a down time from planned retreat activities. You will be surprised at the group related conversation that will ensue.

Be sure to plan enough time for the prep, cooking, and cleaning of the meal. Any group numbering 10 or more will need considerable time to make a meal happen - especially if your group is cooking.

Be sure to offer a break to the people who cooked the meal. Anyone (including yourself) who cooked the meal, needs a little downtime before the curriculum begins again.

Some retreat sites will offer meals for an extra charge. This is convenient if you can afford it or even if you can do a mix of food that is prepared for you and food that is prepared by your group. It is less hassle for you but it takes away an important teambuilder from your group.

Have them bring a snack to share with others. Ask each person or a handful of people (team leaders) to bring a treat to share during the retreat. This cuts your cost and offers members the opportunity to share some of their culture or their favorite treat.