



We believe that gathering people together around a common table to discuss an important issue in a comfortable environment is a great way to grow sustainable and durable support for Garden City Food Co-op – and we need your help!

As member-owners of the co-op, we all have a real stake in the progress and success of this project, and YOU are an important and powerful tool in the goal to build our membership base. By hosting a dinner party (or potluck, wine & cheese, afternoon tea, etc.) for your friends and neighbours you can help grow our efforts in a fun and personal way. There are many reasons to support a retail grocery store co-op, but your friends who have not yet done so will most likely be swayed by what you have to say about why you joined.

If the idea of hosting a gathering intimidates or stresses you out, our Dinner Party Hosting Support Guide should put you at ease. Please see below for the steps of the planning process!





STEP 1: SEND US AN E-MAIL

Send an e-mail to jill@gardencityfoodcoop.ca and include "Dinner Party" in the subject field.

Please include the following information in your email:

a. An estimate of the size of your party.

Ideally, we would ask you to secure a minimum of 10 attendees. The more the merrier! The expected size of your party will determine the number of guest speakers from the co-op's board.

b. The format of your gathering.

This is your chance to get creative! We suggest a potluck for minimal stress to the host, but you are free to make this event yours however you wish – wine & cheese tasting, afternoon/high tea, farmer's market dinner, backyard barbeque, Meatless Monday... have fun with it and make it your own!

c. Your desired date & time (plus a back up option or two).

Planning should begin approximately 2-3 weeks before the party, and the more of a heads up you give us the more dates will be available. Parties should be scheduled for a two-hour time slot.

d. The address where you will be hosting.

Once you receive confirmation from the Garden City Food Co-op team it's time to get the party started!



STEP 2: INVITATIONS

a. Finalize your guest list.

Include any and everyone you think might be interested in joining – consider all of your favourite people and networks – family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, school alumni, parent groups, social clubs, hobby groups, community organizations, church groups, holiday card list, etc.

b. Cultivate your message.

Make sure that your guests know that the goal of your party is to increase awareness in and support of the co-op. Direct people to our website to learn what membership is all about.

c. Invite your guests.

A few electronic options include:

- <http://www.punchbowl.com/>
Stylish e-cards made to look like paper cards; many free customizable options.
- <http://www.evite.com>
Popular, widely used, free electronic invitation site.
- <http://www.celebrations.com>

Allows you to generate and mail paper versions of your electronic invitation at reasonable costs.

If you would like guests to bring a dish or drink be sure to include your needs in the invite. You may want to ask your guests to include what they plan to bring when they RSVP so that you can plan/manage your menu requests accordingly.

STEP 3: GET SOME SUPPORT

A member of the Co-op Board or Steering Committee will attend the party to help answer questions and handle the registration process for anyone interested in joining the night of your party. A staff member or volunteer may also attend to help with the registration process.

If you are friends with any other current member-owners already, we encourage you to ask a couple of them to join the party to help greet your guests, mingle and answer questions.

STEP 4: SHARE YOUR STORY

a. Prepare your own personal statement about your interest in the co-op: Why did you become a member-owner? Why is having a co-op in St. Catharines important to you? Why do you love the co-op?

b. Develop the agenda: Decide when you will introduce the topic, whether you would like to speak about the co-op (or have a Board Member or Steering Committee Member do it). We do ask you, in any event, to make the final appeal using your personal statement. A direct “ask” from you will have the greatest impact on your friends, colleagues and family members.

STEP 5: FOLLOW UP

a. Call guests to follow-up on the invitation. This is a personal touch your guests will likely appreciate. Make sure to suggest that guests bring their chequebooks with them. “I think you’ll want to become involved that very night.”

b. Remind your support team of fellow member-owners of the time you need them to arrive (if applicable).

c. Check in with the Garden City Food Co-op team – send an email to our Membership & Volunteer Coordinator at jill@gardencityfoodcoop.com with a final head count and agenda.



Relax and enjoy the company of your friends!

Thank you for helping to grow our community! The more quickly we can grow our member/ownership base, the faster we'll be able to open our doors. It's time to eat!