



How To

Feed your Messy Church

What to cook

- Every Messy Church session includes a meal suggestion – **Get Messy! magazine**.
- Check out Jane Butcher’s handbook for Messy Church catering teams – **Messy Cooks**.
- If you’re ‘going wild’ outdoors, look up the Messy take-out menu in the **Messy Adventures book** or online [here](#).
- Offer a choice to accommodate allergies, dietary requirements and picky eaters, such as pasta with a choice of sauces or jacket potatoes with different fillings.
- Include a food activity – these are often included in the session material, e.g. making fruit kebabs for dessert.
- You don’t have to provide a three-course meal or even hot food! If you meet in the morning, you could start with breakfast, or if you’re later in the day, serve afternoon tea with sandwiches and cakes.

Special dietary requirements and allergies

- Catering for and being inclusive to the needs of all those who come to Messy Church is an important part of reflecting Jesus’ hospitality around the meal table and making everyone feel welcome.
- If possible, get people to sign up in advance and capture any dietary requirements.
- Share the menu in advance or have it on display as people arrive so they can flag any potential issues.
- Ensure you provide a list of ingredients for any homemade meals and keep the packaging of any prepared food for allergy advice.
- Have several ‘free from’ options in your store cupboard, such as gluten-free pasta and dairy-free custard.
- Have your regulars’ dietary requirements on file. You can capture this in a registration form available to [download here](#).

Keeping the cost down

- Bulk buy frequently used items such as pasta and tinned tomatoes.
- Frozen vegetables save both time and money, allow you to add more for unexpected guests and reduces wastage.
- Go vegetarian! This avoids separate options or buying expensive meat.
- Invite people to bring and share dishes.

Dealing with unpredictable numbers

- Have a team member dish up rather than allow self-serve to control portion sizes – you can always offer seconds later.
- Have some foods on standby to add into your meal – e.g. tinned beans or pulses for stews.
- Serve smaller portions with a bread roll.

Food hygiene

- When it comes to food preparation, churches are not exempt from health and safety legislation.
- It is important that all members of your catering team are given training in food hygiene, health and safety in kitchen areas and first aid.
- Contact your local authority for advice, guidance and information about training for your catering team.
- **Ecclesiastical Insurance Group** offers guidelines for churches about food preparation and general health and safety.
- **The Food Standards Agency** also has information about food hygiene and legislation.

Sharing faith over food

- Make sure team members eat together with the people that come to your Messy Church. Not only does it show care for your team (they won't have to cook when they get home!), but sharing Jesus might just come more naturally over the meal.
- Eating together provides an opportunity to get to know one another, build relationships, reflect on the theme and ask questions.
- Involve others in setting up, serving and clearing away. Messy Church is all about fellowship together.
- Why not use the washing-up time to do a spot of reflective practice as a team – where did you see God at work today?

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