



Long-Handled Spoon Dinners

Thank you for getting some neighbors together, long-handled spoon style! This is a template with some possibilities for your dinner. Use what's helpful and leave what's not. These dinners are simple.

***Interested in hosting a gathering, but the Long-Handled Spoons Dinner isn't what you're looking for?** See the end of this document for other gathering ideas that could build community around an ecologically sustainable, socially just, and economically viable food system.*

1. Invite some number of folks, maybe 5-10. You can define what neighbor means to you (and don't feel too beholden to 5-10 people—you can decide what size gathering feels good to you). We encourage you to invite some people you don't already have strong relationships with—that parent of your kid's classmate you've been meaning to connect with? The older neighbor who could use help with shoveling?

If you don't already have the emails or phone numbers of your neighbors, this is the perfect time to knock on their door or wave them down on the street to invite them to the dinner and trade contact info. If you haven't hosted a gathering like this before, this may feel like the hardest part. Be brave, and then let out a sigh of relief that the biggest challenge is behind you!

2. Plan to share some food together! It doesn't have to be fancy, just cozy and welcoming.

You may be surprised how much local, organic food is available this time of year, including storage and greenhouse crops, dairy products, meat, sauces, tofu, preserves, bread—the list goes on!

Independently owned grocery stores and co-ops are generally more likely to sell local, organic food. Tip: look for the Vermont Organic Farmers seal or the text "Certified organic by Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF)" on food labels—that signals it's produced locally *and* organically.

There are also lots of farm stands open this time of year, and you get the added bonus of supporting the farm directly. Search NOFA-VT's [farm directory](#) and pick "farm stand" under the features drop-down to find one near you. Many winter farmers markets are still in full swing, as well, and you can find them on NOFA-VT's [farmers market directory](#).

3. Think about your goals and how you want the dinner to flow.



Some Possible Goals:

- Build trust with your neighbors
- Identify shared values
- Build the muscle of being together, talking together
- Identify some next ways to move together

Possible Flow:

I. Introductions and Welcome

- Go around and ask folks to share name and pronouns, where they live
- Offer any notes about your home that folks should know

II. Grounding: Why this Long-Handled Spoon Dinner/Gathering

- Breaking bread together has long been the fiber that weaves strong communities together. As neighbors, coming together to defend what we love, build resilience, and to remind ourselves that we're here to keep each other fed, safe, and warm. The parable of the long-handled spoons can be used as a way to ground the gathering through its key message: to help ourselves, we must help each other.
- Invite folks to share their own why. This constellates the purpose and distills what the meeting is about. Let this go as long as it feels alive, no more than 10 minutes. (Note: this part can be really beautiful!)

III. Break Bread and Have Good, Simple Conversation

Select one or two of these questions and ask people to take five minutes and write their own answer down. Go around in a circle and have each person share.

- What are we concerned about in our community?
- How can we plan to keep ourselves and our neighbors safe?
- How could we get together more as neighbors?
- What could we do together to improve our community that we couldn't do alone?
- How can we expand our love and safety beyond those people we already know?

IV. Open up for more free-flowing conversation for the rest of the night. If you want some structure, some ideas for that time are below.

V. Invite folks to plan some next steps for yourselves. Some possibilities...

- Planning a next dinner or gathering! Popcorn some ideas.



- Participating in a training, workshop, or skillbuilding opportunity together
- Learning and sharing ways to keep folks safe, local resources and hubs.
- Discuss protocols for however the group wants to stay connected. Suggest a Signal thread as a community bulletin board.
- Help people download Signal.

And wrap up by sharing gratitude and confirming any next steps!

More ideas:

- **Share some quotes**
 - “Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” - Rev Dr MLK Jr
 - “Kindness eases change.” - Octavia Butler.
 - “Sometimes things are a mess and you have to get help from your friends.” – Ira Wallace at NOFA-VT’s Winter Conference
- **Share some poetry**
 - Two poems from Marge Piercy: [The Low Road](#) and [Connections](#)
- **Make some Long-Handled Spoons zines**
 - Here is a [link to a printable zine](#) of the parable of the long-handled spoons, and here are [instructions on how to fold a zine](#)! This would be a fun welcome activity to get the gathering flowing and give something to do with their hands.
- **Invite folks to share good work they’re involved with**
 - Some groups have done a flyer-making project that’s fun and hands-on! Hand out markers/ pencils/ etc. Everyone takes a moment to make a flyer about an effort they’re involved in. Doesn’t have to be fancy but it can be. Then, everyone gets one minute to speak on each effort, and invite others in. (Example: “I am involved with a legal guardianship project. You can get involved by xyz!”) Make sure you have someone keeping time with a timer and cutting people off at 1 minute. Afterward, lay out the flyers for folks to photograph efforts they are interested in joining, with contact info so they can be in touch.



Ideas for NOFA-VT Long-Handled Spoons *Gatherings*

Different tracks for building community, resources, and power beyond the [Long-Handled Spoons Dinners](#)

<i>Focus of the gathering</i>	Member-Raising / Community Building	Fund-Raising / Resource Building	Organizing & Advocacy / Power Building
<i>What the gathering might look like</i>	<p>Potluck for 10-12 of your neighbors and friends who want to learn more about ways to get involved in building a better food and farming system</p> <p>Community craft night for folks in your area who want to make a community resource flyer to share local mutual aid efforts going on</p>	<p>Living room gathering of 12-30 friends to hear about NOFA-VT's work from a NOFA-VT staff or Board Member over some light snacks and drinks</p> <p>A backyard show with a local band and ice cream social to benefit NOFA-VT's Resilience Fund and hear more about our climate adaptation work</p>	<p>Pizza party around the kitchen table and postcard writing to local legislators asking them to fund a key initiative NOFA-VT is working on, like the Farm Security Fund</p> <p>A group of neighbors meeting up and sharing some snacks while practicing talking with their legislators for the next NOFA-VT State House Day</p>
<i>Potential goals</i>	<p>5-10 folks to sign-up to become a NOFA-VT member</p> <p>Completed community resource flyer</p> <p>Shared communication platform for ongoing mutual aid work</p>	<p>\$1,500 in grassroots donations from event</p> <p>4-6 new donors to NOFA-VT</p> <p>5 matches to the host's \$500 donation</p>	<p>10-20 postcards sent</p> <p>5-10 calls made</p> <p>Feeling more confident to talk with your legislators at the next State House day</p> <p>Commitment to collect 10 petition signatures each</p>
<i>Materials to gather & bring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign-in sheet - Membership brochures - NOFA-VT stickers - Icebreaker activity - Posters and markers - Breakout activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign-in sheet - Donation envelopes - NOFA-VT brochure - Stickers - Dev. Director business cards - NOFA-VT Impact Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign-in sheet - Postcards and stamps - Callscripts - Posters and markers - Icebreaker activity - NOFA-VT policy FAQs
<i>Support NOFA-VT can provide</i>	<p>Talking points about NOFA-VT and issues related to our mission, sign-in sheets, NOFA-VT program literature and stickers, donation envelopes and membership brochures, advocacy actions and QR sign-up codes, pre-meeting prep and role playing. If it would be helpful, a staff and/or board members may be able to attend your gathering as well.</p>		
<i>What the "ask" could look like</i>	<p>Will you join as a member of NOFA-VT to help build our people power across the state to work toward a more just/equitable future?</p>	<p>Will you make a gift to support NOFA-VT's work to nourish our shared vision of a Vermont food system that benefits people and the planet?</p>	<p>Will you stand alongside 2,500 NOFA-VT members and declare that we can write and pass new policies that support the future for Vermont's food system that we want and deserve?</p>
<i>What participants leave with</i>	<p>Contact info for fellow participants</p> <p>Signal group for mutual aid networks</p> <p>Potluck leftovers!</p>	<p>Information on other ways to give and planned giving</p> <p>2025 Impact Report and program-specific information if there was an interest area</p>	<p>A clear and concise way to articulate their "why"</p> <p>Information about getting involved in NOFA-VT's Policy & Organizing work</p>