NYC Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee

A GUIDEBOOK FOR GATHERING
This year, in the season of Eid al-Adha and Rosh Hashanah, the NYC Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee, together with The People’s Supper, is inviting our communities to come together as one, seizing the opportunity to share and learn from one another, and to reflect on the holidays’ themes of service, sacrifice, and renewal.

As an Interfaith Supper host, you are playing a critical role in holding space for a replenishing, healing meal and conversation across lines of difference in this unique and challenging historical moment.

Too often, we congregate solely with those who look like us, and believe the same things as us. Lacking relationships across lines of difference, we are led to believe our worst stereotypes.

At its most extreme, the hateful rhetoric that results leads to hateful acts, whether on a commuter train in Portland, or a mosque in Minnesota, or a college town in Virginia. In the first three months of the year, Anti-Semitic incidents in the US were up by 86%, while Anti-Muslim hate crimes rose by 91% in the first half of 2017.

Enough. We’re inviting Jews, Muslims, Christians, secularists, atheists, and everyone in between to sit down for a chance to go beneath the headlines to understand the stories of real struggles and real fears and real hopes and real dreams that have shaped who we are.

We’ve pulled together everything you need to know to host supper — from pointers on how to create an inviting and intimate space to how to break the ice.

Let’s get cooking.

About The People’s Supper: At The People’s Supper, we believe that to be welcome – to feel wholly at ease in our own skin, to be fully seen and heard and witnessed – is a basic right. Suppers are a place where we can come together over one of humanity’s most ancient and simple rituals. A place where we can share meaningful stories, good food, and a sense of community. A place where we can build understanding and trust.

About The NYC Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee: The NYC Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee is dedicated to cutting the chain of ignorance feeding fear feeding hate by inspiring people of diverse backgrounds to engage and form new bonds. We believe people-to-people outreach can bring sustainable, systemic change so we encourage our community to commit to learning about other cultures with an open mind and compassionate heart. All are welcome to attend our events and step out of their comfort zones.
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An evening with The People's Supper is unstructured by design: There is no formula or script, and just as no two stories are ever exactly alike, no two suppers will ever be quite the same. Feel free to make it your own, and share your wisdom with the rest of us.

WE AGREE

There’s a lot we may not agree on. In sitting down, we choose to agree on this:

I will grant you welcome, and I thank you for the welcome you grant me.

I will show up, be present, and be open to creating this experience together.

I will speak & listen with truth & love, agreeing or disagreeing with respect & kindness.

www.thepeoplesupper.org
AN INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE

Together we will create brave space
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be our brave space together,
and
We will work on it side by side.

by Micky ScottBey Jones
A FAVORITE SUPPER RECIPE

We humbly share our recipe for an evening that fills both stomach and soul.

INGREDIENTS

Good people
Good food (potluck-style)
The People’s Supper conversation-starters
Curious minds + willing hearts

Optional: Mixtape playlist, candles, flowers, ornamental gourds, [ace] soundtrack, and/or whatever you do to #makeitnice.

HOW TO HOST

TO PREP

1. Sign up to host at thepeoplessupper.org/host-a-supper.

2. Send out an invite. Wondering what to say? Here are a few template emails you can try.

3. Send a confirmation email to all guests. Check to see if anyone has any food allergies, and have folks sign up to bring a dish (ideally one with a story behind it).

4. Place the communal agreements where everyone will see them. (Tip: Try placing them on every plate before guests arrive. (Printer-friendly version that you can download and print at home here.)

5. Cook up the main dish and set the table. As neighbors & friends arrive, welcome everyone by pouring drinks. Spend a few minutes in casual conversation as folks filter in, and keep folks busy with last-minute prep tasks.

TO SERVE

6. Optional: Once everyone is at the table, you may want to kick off with an opening ritual or brief meditation, as a way for guests to tune out all the noise of the preceding day and tune into the conversation to come. Check out a few suggested tips and tools in our Ritual Zine.

7. Welcome everyone + share the context for the evening.

8. Introduce the guidelines for the evening (P7). Before you dive into conversation, briefly explain our guidelines.

9. Read An Invitation to Brave Space (P5). We recommend reading it popcorn-style: As host, introduce the piece and read the first line, inviting people to reach each line separately as they are moved to, and reminding people that here, too, silence is a gift.

10. Plate up.

11. Cheers. Ask all guests to dip a slice of apple in honey and read the toast aloud: Tonight we begin our journey in sweetness by dipping apples into honey, because it is customary to start the Eid day with a bite of something sweet, just as part of the Rosh Hashanah tradition is to dip apples in honey. Tonight we will couple this sweetness with unity as we share our stories and reflect collectively on the themes of sacrifice, service, and renewal in our faith traditions. Cheers!

12. Do introductions. Remind people to try to keep their answers to three minutes or less. As host, share first. You can choose to go around the table or do it popcorn-style, with folks jumping in as they’re ready.

Prompt: Tell us about the spiritual or religious background of your childhood. How did it shape your view of service to your community?

13. Introduce Question 1: Describe a time recent or long since past that someone in your life made a sacrifice on your behalf.

14. Introduce Question 2: Describe an experience when you were forced to deal with something that initially felt like a burden but turned out to be a blessing.

15. Introduce Question 3: Who is someone you know, a historical figure, or a figure from your faith tradition/scriptures, who models the value of service through their actions? How have they influenced you?

16. Fifteen minutes before the scheduled end (or thereabouts), serve dessert.

17. End the night by asking people how that went for them. What felt good? What didn’t? What was most memorable? What would you want to see more of?

18. Invite guests to repeat!

“Revolutionary love is a well-spring of care, an awakening to the inherent dignity and beauty of others and the earth, a quieting of the ego, a way of moving through the world in relationship, asking: ‘What is your story? What is at stake? What is my part in your flourishing?’

VALERIE KAUR
GROUND RULES

We’re not interested in talking politics, or debating issues, or attempting to change each other’s minds. We’re interested in going beneath the headlines and understanding the stories of real struggles and real fears and real hopes and real dreams that have shaped who we are.

The ground rules aren’t meant to box you in, they are meant to provide a sense of shared way of being during our time together. The Center for Courage & Renewal calls their guiding principles touchstones, other groups call them agreements. After reading through them, we think you’ll get the drift that they are more concerned with underlying principles of love, respect and creating what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the Beloved Community and less about policing each other’s behavior. So take a deep breath and dive into some ingredients for brave and engaging conversation.

Once you sit down, introduce the following ground rules:

1. **Stick with “I” statements and avoid advice-giving.**
   Your experience is yours and please honor and respect that others’ experiences are theirs. Putting this to practice is hard work: It means, in the words of our friends at The Center for Courage & Renewal, “no fixing, saving, advising, or correcting each other!” Your job is to silence the noise and tune into your inner voice, trusting that everyone else at the table has the power to do the same. Simply speak your truth.

2. **Pass the mic, and allow for silence.** Notice that you’re talking more than others at the table? Step back and give other voices a chance to be heard. Know that we welcome silence just as much as we welcome speech, and ask only that when you speak, you do so intentionally.

3. **Vegas rule:** Just as what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, what happens at the table stays at the table. No quotes or identifying details will be shared without permission.

4. **Check yourself on whether you are advocating or attempting to influence others:** If you find yourself doing so, stop, breathe, and open up to what is happening around you. Ask questions instead of telling someone what to think.*
   - (*From our friends at Speaking Down Barriers. Based out of Spartanburg, SC, their network of facilitators and educators create transformative and healing dialogue around the barriers that separate us, including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and class. More: speakdownbarriers.org.)

5. **Be aware of the privilege you hold in a conversation.** The folks at Daring Discussions (daringdiscussions.com) put this one beautifully, and it’s particularly essential when you’re bringing together a group of folks who share a mix of identities: “Being or becoming aware of privilege is important for respectful dialogue. ‘Privilege’ doesn’t necessarily mean wealth and it certainly doesn’t mean a person has never struggled—it means the relative power you hold in society that is structurally unequal due to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, religious discrimination and so on. An individual may hold some kinds of privilege while also experiencing some form of oppression. Holding privilege is what allows us to avoid and ignore issues that do not directly affect us, and understanding your own privilege is an important part of giving others space to share difficult and vulnerable truths about their experience. During this discussion, being aware of the privilege you hold is an important part of creating space for your and vulnerable truths about their experience.”

“In our interconnected world, we must learn to feel enlarged, not threatened, by difference.”

RAvBI JONATHAN SACKS
TOASTS & BLESSINGS

Toasts are a great way to kick off a conversation. Once everyone has plated up, invite everyone to raise their glass, whatever its contents:

Let us raise our glasses to remember the challenges and the joys of this last week. We made it! May we remember the faces around this table when next week's challenges and joys dance around us and may that memory give us hope and strength.

May you be blessed! May you have hope! May you savor the flavors and aromas of life even in the midst of a crazy world!

To life! To love! To new friendships and blossoming opportunities that start around the dinner table!

To radical hospitality. To unity in diversity. To revolutionary love. We raise our glasses!

Let us raise our glasses to the family and friends who taught us to treat others with love, to be curious about the world and to show kindness to our neighbors.

Invite everyone to light a tea light candle and share the name of a person who inspires courage in you, living or dead, famous or familial, and why. Toast those just named, and those who inspire us to be our best selves, and ourselves and each other for having the guts to step into a space of vulnerability right now.
**BRING A READING**
Invite guests to bring a reading (a poem, a quote, a song lyric) that’s fortified them over the last few months. Read it together, popcorn-style, and allow the words to wash over you. Share whatever is stirred.

**SHOW ‘N TELL**
Have everyone bring a photo or an object that’s meaningful to them: the kind that activates your senses, something that immediately conjures a place or a person, the touch of a hand, the sound of a voice, a moment in which you felt fully alive. Invite everyone to share the story.

**DO FIRST, TALK SECOND**
Did you catch that Heineken ad, “Worlds Apart” that racked up 11M views in the span of a couple of weeks — the one where pairs of strangers bond over building furniture together, only to learn they sit on opposite ends of the political spectrum?
Whatever your thoughts about it, the principle behind it is a staple in conflict resolution, and for anyone out to forge connection across lines of difference: Identify a shared challenge, and equip people with the tools they need to address it together.
Encourage folks at your table to join you for a volunteer day at a local community garden, and find out what local causes they need help with. Take a page out of TimeBanks’ book, and organize a skill-exchange: ask everyone to share one thing they can offer to the group, and one thing they need right now.

**ADDITIONAL IDEAS: ACTIVITIES WE LOVE**

*We decided to cook together to prepare the meal as a community, and I so enjoyed the rich, organic conversations that flowed from us as we chopped vegetables and whipped up some guacamole side by side.*

Kiki, Minneapolis

*We started off by dedicating our participation to something or someone. I thought that was really special.*

Mandale, NYC

“One of my guests was a wine-maker and brought a selection of his favorite wines. He led a tasting for the group shortly after everyone’s arrival, and it brought the room together in a really effortless and natural way. I also ask guests to speak and listen from the heart and to limit remarks after someone has shared; we’ve established a brave space and don’t need to comment, confront, console, or compliment someone’s story.”

Scotty, NYC
IS HOSTING FOR ME?

A People’s Supper host commits to one thing and one thing only: to host a meaningful conversation over a shared meal, for folks who could use a little respite right now. We’ve found that great hosts have similar qualities to any great host: warmth, openness, ease starting and coaxing along conversations. Our tables are peer-to-peer, so our hosts are participants, too, rather than outside facilitators.

YOU’D MAKE A GREAT PEOPLE’S SUPPER HOST IF…

• You are willing to model #bravespace. Creating brave space is about being courageous enough to model vulnerability. It’s about co-creating a space of radical hospitality and nurturing where we seek to truly see each other and respect the other’s humanity. See our Invitation to Brave Space on P5.

• You want to #realtalk. Sharing your own story gives others permission to share theirs. This isn’t about giving advice, or waxing poetic from your soapbox. You want to steer clear of intellectual banter and philosophizing of any kind, and talk openly about your lived experience. To become a successful host, you have to be willing to be vulnerable, and to reflect deeply on your own story.

• You can open your doors. You have space in your home to host a supper or the creativity to find another cozy spot (e.g. a gallery, a park, or a friend’s backyard).

• You love to #makeitnice. You like to impress, without being all pretentious about it. You’re not a five-star chef, but you do have to dig not ordering takeout, and creating a space with a little bit of that je-ne-sais-quoi.

• You find it easy to make conversation. These conversations are all about connecting through conversation and storytelling, so you’ll need to be comfortable chatting, prodding, questioning and laughing with other people while discussing sensitive stuff.

• You listen. Deeply. You recognize that what you don’t know about someone far exceeds what you do, and you prefer asking questions to giving answers. A big part of being a host is simply listening, asking follow-up questions and resisting the urge to “fix” something for someone else. The most important thing hosts do is create space at the table for every person to be heard.

“…”
Like the food we place upon our tables, the way we choose to share a meal represents one of the most enduring human rituals. Gathering for supper is something to look forward to at the end of a long day or week: a chance to break bread, toast the future, and enjoy the company of others.

**SUPPER PREP**

- **Spread the word:** Start with people you know and branch out from there. We find tables of 5-8 people are ideal for a supper, though you can do it with as few as four people or as many as 12. Here's a template email you can use to spread the word.

- **Send an invite:** Once the date is finalized, send an email inviting guests that includes a link to a digital sign-up sheet for food and drinks. See sample invite here. Free trick: Try Fotor for creating more visual invites and Google Docs for the potluck sign-up sheet.

- **Prepare your guests:** We recommend sharing our communal agreements and a link to our FAQ before you sit down, so that they know what to expect. Here's a sample email.

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**TIPS FOR HOSTING AN INTERFAITH PEOPLE’S SUPPER**

- **Bring to the surface your motivations, hopes, and commitments:** Within your own faith community or with the people you’re thinking of hosting with, ask yourselves: What do we hope will be different - for our dinner guests or for our community at large - as a result of bridging religious difference? What kind of relational work or conversations might we need to do before the dinner to build trust, mutual care, and consent? What kind of commitment are we willing and able to make to continue to thicken relationships across faith lines after the dinner is over?

- **Make sure there is balanced representation of faith traditions among guests:** By no means does this mean that you should have every world religion represented at the table. But for an interfaith supper to feel meaningful, and to make sure no one feels like they are being tokenized, it’s important to ensure there is substantive participation from the different communities involved. In other words, an interfaith supper doesn’t mean eighteen Methodists and one Muslim. You get it!

- **Schedule your supper for a time that works for all guests’ prayer, worship, and holiday calendar:** Let’s be real, there’s nothing worse than organizing an interfaith event only to find out that it’s been scheduled during a holiday in the tradition of a community that has been invited - or being invited to an event scheduled squarely in the middle of your holiest day or days of the year! If you’re in charge of finding a date, here is an interfaith calendar you can use as a reference: interfaith-calendar.org/. When in doubt about whether a date or time poses a conflict with worship times or holidays, ask!

- **Ensure there is food that everyone can enjoy:** Cooking vegetarian is the safest way to ensure foods are inclusive of a diverse range of dietary restrictions, religious or otherwise. If you’re doing a potluck and are unsure about what guidelines to give folks on food preparation, ask your co-hosts about their tradition’s needs and/or ask guests to name any particular food restrictions. And remember, dining together across religious difference is not just about figuring out what each other doesn’t eat - it’s about learning what foods we do eat and love. Consider encouraging your guests to bring a dish that is meaningful in their faith, such as a special food that they ate at a holiday growing up. See the section below about using dishes as a prompt for storytelling. To keep track of who’s bringing what, use our Google Sheets template!
TIPS FOR HOSTING AN INTERFAITH PEOPLE’S SUPPER (CONT.)

• Use food or other religious objects as a springboard for stories: From breaking Ramadan fast with dates, to matza bread to Christmas cookies, and beyond, food often plays a central role in spiritual traditions - and can be a powerful prompt for storytelling. As part of your introductions, invite people to share a story about food and their faith, or about a certain food they love (or hate!) from a holiday or other ritual.

• When sharing spiritual practices or stories from a tradition, don’t universalize: If people lead prayers, practices or reflections from their faith, ask them to start with, “In my tradition, we do ...” or “In my tradition, we believe that ...” Being specific about naming where beliefs, practices, and stories come from can help guests feel more comfortable receiving the wisdom that each tradition has to offer without feeling like beliefs or practices are being forced on them.

• Think intentionally about prayer and blessings: Most faith traditions have rituals or prayers associated with food, before, during, or after a meal. These moments can be an opportunity for learning about and sharing spiritual practices across difference. However, it’s important to make sure that people give consent before participating in or witnessing a prayer from another tradition or sharing prayer practices from their own. With your planning team, think about who will lead prayers and when (will there be multiple prayers? Or, will a representative from one tradition lead an opening prayer, and another a closing prayer?). Will anyone need to pray at a certain point or in a separate space during the gathering time? Be in conversation with your co-hosts about how you will integrate prayer in a way that will feel good for everyone.

DON’T FORGET

• Make them feel comfortable: Our tendency is to have a million things to do at the last minute, so a word of hard-earned advice: Don’t. Be sure that you’re able to invest real attention in every person as he or she walks in the door.

• Enlist help: While folks are filtering in, intentionally leave a few things unfinished: save lighting the candles, for instance, or setting the table. It helps to give people something to do as they’re waiting for everyone else to arrive.

• Document the supper: Capture photos of the food and table, and powerful themes from the supper. Tag us on Instagram or Twitter at @PeoplesSupper, and use the hashtag #peoplessupper, and we’ll share your creative inspiration with our social network. *NOTE: Snapping selfies or people pics? Want to share a quote that came up around the table? Just be sure to ask permission first.

• Close the dinner with a brief reflection: Ever wondered why your favorite teacher was so big on journaling, or why every workshop leader always closes with a reflection session? Science has shown that taking a few minutes to reflect at the end of an experience can help us internalize it. A few minutes before your stated end-time, ask everyone what was most memorable about the night, and what they plan to take back to their own communities.
We hope you feel ready to host a People’s Supper meal! Here’s a checklist to help you prep.

PLANNING A SUPPER
- Recruit a co-host (optional)
- Recruit guests
- Set the date and location
- Email info@thepeoplessupper.org with your date, so we can add it to the calendar
- Create potluck sign-up sheet and choose a dish
- Prepare your guests for what to expect

DAY-OF PREP
- Pick up ingredients
- Set-up the space (be sure to place the communal agreements where guests will see them)
- Cook the main dish (Alternatively: Feel free to invite guests over early to cook together)
- Kick off with a toast
- Introduce the ground rules (see P7)
- Do introductions
- Go around in a circle, answering Questions 1-3 (see P6)
- Talk, listen, eat, & drink
- Reflect and share resources
- Document supper with photos of table and food

POST-SUPPER
- Send thank you notes or emails, resource information, photos and survey to guests
- Complete host survey
- Consider what comes next for you (another supper, plugging into community resources or collective healing or actions, etc.)

More resources for hosts are available at thepeoplessupper.org

If you have any other questions, reach out to us at: info@thepeoplessupper.org

This guide is intended to be neither static nor complete: figure out what works for you, flag what doesn’t, and record tips of your own. And don’t forget to share your wisdom with the rest of us!

“You are imperfect, you are wired for struggle, but you are worthy of love and belonging.”

BRENÉ BROWN
Enjoy interfaith meals and gatherings? Host an Interfeast with the NYC Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee! Interfeast is a series of intimate themed meals and conversations, with 5-30 attendees, hosted by our community members. Interfeasts can be hosted in a private home, at a restaurant, community center, or public space. Past themes include Afghani cuisine, Rumi’s poetry, sacred music, women in Islam and Judaism, music of the Middle East and North Africa, Ramadan, and Shabbat. For more info contact info@muslimjewishsolidarity.org.

Thanks to our partners:

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Veterans for American Ideals is a nonpartisan group of veterans who share the belief that America is strongest when its policies and actions match its ideals.

We dedicated our lives to our country as citizen-soldiers, and we believe that honor, courage, commitment, duty, and country are not just words, but values worth defending. After taking off the uniform, we seek to continue serving our country by advocating for policies that are consistent with the ideals that motivated us to serve in the first place. Our current campaigns are focused on saving the Special Immigrant Visa program for interpreters and translators who served with the U.S. military, protecting refugees, and countering Islamophobia.