

COMMUNITY FOOD POP-UP: DETAILED GUIDE

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

This guide is provided for educational purposes only. We do not suggest, recommend, or encourage you to organize these events. Commonwealth Grocers is not liable for any actions you take based on this information. Always comply with local laws, health regulations, and obtain necessary permits before organizing any public food events.

COMPLETE SUPPLY LIST

Essential Supplies You Will Need:

- **Grill** - For cooking fresh food on-site
- **Plates** - Disposable or eco-friendly options
- **Napkins** - Buy in bulk
- **Coolers** - Multiple large coolers for different ingredients
- **Ice** - Much more than you think you'll need
- **Signage** - A whiteboard is ideal for writing "FREE TACOS" and updating throughout the day
- **Taco filling** - Meat, beans, or other protein options
- **Tortillas** - Buy these wholesale too

Recommended Supplies You Will Want:

- **Vacuum sealer with bags** - Essential for portioning leftover meat for donations

- **Pop-up tent** - 10×10 minimum for shade
 - **Folding tables** - At least 2-3 tables
 - **Chairs** - For volunteers during slower moments
 - **Phone with Venmo or CashApp** - For accepting donations (Commonwealth Grocers software coming soon!)
 - **Pico de gallo** - Fresh is best
 - **Sour cream** - Keep cold
 - **Cheese** - Shredded saves time
 - **Markers and big roll of paper** - For creating shared community art or collecting ideas (blank canvas approach!)
 - **Price comparison charts** - Download templates to fill in with local prices
 - **Educational materials** - About food systems and wholesale buying
 - **Portable speaker and playlist** - Music draws people and creates atmosphere
 - **Phone on tripod for filming** - Document the event for social media
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DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS: HOW TO GET FOOD AT WHOLESALE COST

Step 1: Connect with Local Vendors

The key to wholesale buying is finding the right people. Here are the most effective approaches:

Finding the Grocery Store Receiver:

- The receiver is the most valuable contact at any grocery store
- They interact directly with EVERY vendor that delivers to the store
- They have all vendor phone numbers and delivery schedules
- Approach them during slower times (usually mid-afternoon)

- Be respectful of their time and explain your community project

Looking for Box Trucks:

- Drive around grocery store loading docks in the early morning (5-8 AM)
- Many trucks have company names and phone numbers painted on the side
- Common vendors to look for: Mission Tortillas, Sysco, US Foods, local meat distributors
- Take photos of truck sides for contact information
- If no number is visible, Google the company name + your city

Direct Approach Method:

- Simply walk up to delivery drivers when they're not actively unloading
- Best targets: Mission Tortillas drivers, meat delivery personnel, produce vendors
- Look for people wearing branded shirts
- Have your elevator pitch ready: "We're organizing a community event to feed people at wholesale prices"
- Most drivers are happy to connect you with their dispatch or sales team

Step 2: Establish a Minimum Order

Understanding Vendor Economics:

- Vendors' time is money - every stop needs to be profitable
- Small orders often aren't worth the delivery time
- Be upfront about this being a smaller community order
- Ask directly: "What's your minimum order for delivery?"

Making It Work:

- If the minimum is too high, ask about picking up at their warehouse
- Consider combining orders with other community groups

- Sweeten the deal: A \$50 cash tip can make a small order worthwhile
- Some vendors may be willing to add you to existing routes nearby

Step 3: Organize the Rendezvous

Delivery Options:

- **Best case:** They deliver to your event location or storage space
- Space needs: Room for a box truck to park and unload
- Have multiple people ready to help unload quickly

Pickup Options:

- You'll need a truck or large SUV/van
- Bring plenty of coolers and ice
- Meet them on their regular route (often at another delivery stop)
- Be EXACTLY on time - their schedule is tight

Cold Storage Critical Points:

- Cold items must be transferred to coolers immediately
- Pre-chill coolers the night before if possible
- Use a thermometer to ensure safe temperatures
- Layer ice on bottom and top of products

EVENT PREPARATION DETAILS

Marketing the Event

Online Traffic Generation:

- **Meetup.com**: Create a free event listing
 - Use their AI description writer for quick setup
 - Example: "Free Community Taco Event - Building Food Security Together"

- Link: <https://www.meetup.com/free-taco-parties/events/308572378/>
- **Eventbrite.com:** Another free option with built-in promotion
- **Facebook Events:** Share in local community groups
- **Instagram:** Create event posts and stories
- **TikTok:** Pre-event hype videos work well

In-Person Traffic Strategy:

- Location is everything: Choose spots with natural foot traffic
- Parks near playgrounds work exceptionally well
- Busy pedestrian areas where cars can safely pull over
- **CRITICAL:** Scout your location at the same day/time a week before
- Check for: Competing events, parking availability, permits needed
- Have a backup location ready

Recruiting Volunteers

Minimum Staffing Needs:

- 2-3 people absolute minimum
- Ideal is 4-5 for smooth operation
- Assign clear roles: Grill master, serving, setup/breakdown, donations

Where to Find Help:

- Post in local mutual aid groups
- College student organizations
- Religious congregations
- Neighborhood Facebook groups
- Friends and family (start here!)

Food Preparation Specifics

Meat Processing:

- Large cuts need breaking down - this saves significant money
- Find a friend who hunts or has butchering experience
- YouTube tutorials for basic meat cutting (search: "breaking down primal cuts")
- Chicken is easier than beef for beginners
- Pre-cut into portion sizes the night before

Packaging for Efficiency:

- Vacuum sealer is a game-changer for leftovers
- Pre-portion into 1-2 pound packages
- Label with date and contents
- These become donations or future event supplies
- Keep vacuum-sealed portions on ice for food safety

Marination and Pre-Cooking:

- Marinate meat 12-24 hours before event
- Partially cook (about 50%) the night before
- This allows quick finishing on the grill
- Basic marinade: Oil, lime juice, garlic, cumin, chili powder
- Vegetarian option: Marinated mushrooms or seasoned beans

Educational Materials to Print

Price Comparison Charts:

- Visit 2-3 local grocery stores
- Document prices per pound for common items
- Compare to your wholesale costs
- Create simple chart showing 50-70% savings

- Print 50-100 copies on regular paper

Commonwealth Grocers Information:

- Explain the vision of member-owned grocery
 - Include QR code for signups
 - Track your area's progress toward 1,000 members
 - Highlight employee-ownership opportunities
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DAY OF EVENT: DETAILED TIMELINE

Setup (2 hours before serving)

- Arrive early to claim your spot
- Set up tent and tables first
- Position grill safely (away from tent)
- Arrange serving station flow: Plates → Protein → Toppings → Napkins
- Write "FREE TACOS" prominently on whiteboard
- Add "Donations welcome but not required"
- Test speaker and playlist

During Event Operations

- **Use a tally counter app** to track:
 - Total people served
 - Where they heard about event (online/walking by/friend)
 - Peak serving times
 - This data helps plan future events
- **Photography and Video:**
 - Set up phone on tripod for time-lapse
 - Take photos of happy community members (with permission)

- Short video clips for social media
- Document the wholesale savings displayed
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Have the big paper roll ready for community art
 - Prompt: "What would food security look like in our neighborhood?"
 - Let kids draw while parents learn about the wholesale model
 - Collect emails for future events

Social Media and Documentation

- Post live updates to show real-time impact
 - Tag @commonwealthfood on TikTok
 - Tag @commonwealthgrocers on Instagram/Facebook/Twitter
 - Use hashtags: #FoodSovereignty #CommunityFood #WholesaleForAll #FoodJustice
 - Share specific savings: "These tacos would cost \$5 each at a restaurant, \$3 to make at grocery store prices, but only \$1 at wholesale!"
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FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Typical Cost Breakdown for 200 People:

- Wholesale meat (50 lbs): \$150-200
- Tortillas (400 count): \$20-30
- Toppings and sides: \$50-75
- Ice and supplies: \$30-40
- **Total: \$250-345**

Cost Recovery:

- Average donation: \$2-5 per person

- Vacuum-sealed meat portions: \$5-10 each
 - Typical recovery: 70-90% of costs
 - Remainder: Consider it community investment
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SAFETY AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Check local regulations about serving food in public
 - Some areas require permits for gatherings over certain sizes
 - Food safety: Keep hot foods hot (140°F+) and cold foods cold (40°F or below)
 - Have hand sanitizer available
 - Post allergen information clearly
 - Never pressure anyone for donations
 - Have a first aid kit available
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BUILDING MOMENTUM

After Your First Event:

- Share results on social media
- Plan monthly or bi-weekly events
- Build an email list for announcements
- Connect with other organizers doing similar work
- Document your process improvements

Scaling Up:

- Partner with other community groups
- Approach local businesses for sponsorship
- Consider multiple locations same day
- Train new organizers

- Share your wholesale vendor contacts

Getting Commonwealth to Your Area to Grow Further:

- Need 1,000 signups to begin infrastructure development
 - We seek motivated employee-owners for local operations
 - Full-scale wholesale grocery access for all members
 - True food sovereignty through collective ownership
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CONTACT AND RESOURCES

For questions about this guide or Commonwealth Grocers:

- Email: hello@commonwealthgrocers.com
- Website: commonwealthgrocers.com
- Social: @commonwealthfood

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