

**THE
BIGGEST
BIRTHDAY PARTY
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FREE BARBECUE



INTRO

Most people have invited a few friends over for a summer barbecue, but how about doing it for the whole street? Or outside your church for a Sunday lunch or in the local park?

IDEAL TARGET GROUP:

Everyone!

IDEAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE:

20 – 500

AVERAGE COST:

£150 - £650 (highly dependent on the number of people you're feeding, what you decide to serve, and who will "donate" food and drink.)

THE AIMS:

- To represent God's love and hospitality through building an atmosphere of community and celebration.
- To provide a high quality, fun where Christians can get to invite and then meet and socialise with
- people who live and work locally.
- To enable people from the local area to experience Christian community and have their perceptions of the Christian faith challenged.

WHO?

You can put on a barbecue for absolutely anyone. This is an ideal event for a small group to run or for a church to encourage members to do for their neighbours. If you have a church that is well situated and has a lot of passing traffic at certain times of the day, you could run it as a surprise for commuters or passers-by and just invite people to join you for a free burger. Alternatively you could put it on as an appendage to another event, such as a sports screening or a film night. If you really want to bless the whole community you could advertise widely, get in lots of food and put on a big barbecue in a local park.

WHERE?

Find an open area, with enough space for people to sit around and chat. More visible and accessible is always better. It depends on the scale of your event whether the best place is a big front garden or a large open space such as a park or sports ground.

WHEN?

This event can be run at a date that fits with your church's current rhythm of mission, taking into consideration how the event might compliment or clash with your existing church programme. Think about when is right for the people you are inviting. In order to maximise your appeal, choose a time that is not in competition with other events in the community. For this event a week night would be advisable as restaurants are less busy and more able to accommodate such an event. If many people in your community commute to work make sure you give them enough time to get back for the event.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

STEP 1. CREATE A TEAM

You could run this event as a small group, a church or a group of churches. Your team will need to include:

- Someone who is happy to take overall responsibility for the organisation of the event.
- Someone to coordinate a team responsible for buying, preparing and cooking food and drink and sourcing barbecuing equipment.
- Someone to organise location and sort out any permits, safety measures and first air.
- Someone to organise any decoration and to manage clear up at the end.
- Someone to advertise the event if necessary.

A recommended core team size is therefore between 4 and 5 people although you will need to have lots more people involved!

STEP 2. DECIDE ON YOUR COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

Clearly define who your event is aimed at. What geographical area will be the target for your advertising? Is it aimed primarily at a street or block? Is it aimed at commuters or passers-by at a certain time of day or attendees at an event? Is it open to a whole postcode or area? The answers to these questions will largely dictate your costs. Also, think about whether you want to have a few people to stand around and chat, building deeper relationships or if you want to bless hundreds of people, but with less personal contact..

STEP 3. PLAN YOUR FOLLOW UP

Don't leave it until last to work out how this event will fit into the wider mission of the church. You need to have a plan in place for people at different points on their faith journey.

If you are hosting a barbecue on your street and will get into real conversations with people you will see again, think about what further events or activities you can do with your neighbours to continue to build these relationships. Also, make sure you are aware of any evangelistic courses happening locally so that if they really want to know more you can direct them to one. Be prepared so that if several of your neighbours are interested in further conversations about faith you could implement one of the follow-up ideas suggested in 'Our Favourite Evangelistic Ideas' document.

For a larger event, you still need to have the same options in place:

- Somewhere people can be invited who have a genuine interest in exploring faith and learning about Jesus.
- Further events you can invite people to for those who are not interested in church but enjoy the event.
- Clubs and groups people could join to meet their specific needs or interests for those who would like to get more involved because of the community aspect.

STEP 4. BUDGET AND FUNDRAISING

This is not an expensive event to run and would ideally be free for community people to attend. The major cost is of course food and drink, but you may also need a budget for publicity, licensing and other activities such as face painting/sports that you may want to have coincide with the Barbecue.

Street Barbecue

£50 - £100 Food & Drinks
£20 Invite cards
£30 – £50 Other Activities.

Community Barbecue

£100 - £500 Food
£50 - £100 Publicity
£150 Other Activities. Venue, Licensing and Insurance costs also possible for larger scale events.

A Barbecue can cost about £1 a head if you already have the cooking equipment. Especially if you are shopping for big numbers, bulk buying can reduce the costs per head significantly.

If you are putting on the barbecue for your street then apart from the food, some music which you can probably just play from your home sound system and some invite cards are really your only costs. You may want to put on a few games or spend a bit of money on decorations but costs can be kept fairly low for this kind of event.

For a larger event, you may want to have a greater variety of things going on so that people don't just collect their food and go. You could hire in a bouncy castle, have someone doing face paints, or have games going on for people to join in. Costs do not need to be high but you may want to put aside a small budget for this.

Ideally the barbecue will be free as then it serves as a gift to the community and not just another high street food option. If you are also providing entertainment at the event then you could consider charging a small amount for food. You could also have a pot for donations in case people want to give something towards the cost of the day.

Raising Finance

For the smaller event, you probably want to look for ways to fund this so that it can be a gift to your neighbourhood. If you run it as a small group maybe you could all make a small contribution to costs or you could do some low key fundraising to raise the money.

For the larger scale event, if your church(es) or small group(s) do not already have a mission fund that can help with some of the costs of this event you may have to look into some fundraising. This can be everything from cake sales and car washes, to council grants. Most local councils have small grant funds which faith groups can apply for and as your event will be benefitting local business there's a good chance of you being able to raise some funds through this. For larger amounts, your council may have an arts fund or a community fund you can apply to. Visit your local council website for more details.

STEP 5. CHOOSE YOUR VENUE

If you opt for a street barbecue, choose somewhere that has lots of space for people to gather! If there's no good communal space you can go to your local council and fill in a request to close the street. Fair warning will need to be given to the residents. As long as you do not live on a major thoroughfare, this is normally a fairly straightforward process.

If you're putting on a larger event you will need to look for a suitable outside space in your community. When choosing your venue you need to think about:

Visibility: How well will passers-by be able to see the event? Is it on a major thoroughfare?

Space: Is the space suitable for the number of people you hope to attend?

Accessibility: Is the space easy to get to and are there appropriate transport links?

Cost: Most council spaces are free or cheaper to charities, especially if you are not charging for the event.

Privately owned spaces may cost a lot more!

Neighbours: If you are planning to play any amplified music, try to use somewhere that doesn't have too many residences in close proximity or make sure they are given plenty of warning about the noise.

Once you have decided on a venue, get in touch with the owner or council to let them know roughly what you are planning to do and to set up an initial meeting.

Meet the Manager/council member

Arrange for a face to face meeting where you can chat through your vision for the event and how it would work logistically. Remember that this is about building relationships so take the time to get to know the manager/council member if you can and let them know that you want to support his/her enterprise and the local community and not just use the space.

Things to discuss with the manager (for council meetings refer to our council applications document and attend the meeting as prepared as you can):

- Explain who you are and what you are hoping to do.
- Are they happy for you to have a barbecue on their land?
- What costs are involved in using the venue?
- How many people do you expect to attend?
- Are you allowed to put up banners and bunting?
- Does the venue have an entertainment licence or licence to sell food? (If not you will need to apply to the council for a TEN Licence. See our licensing guide.)
- Would they be willing to put posters and flyers up advertising the event in the two weeks leading up to the event?
- Would they be happy for you to have PA? (if required)
- Are they happy for you to include other activities? (if required)

What level of public liability insurance are you expected to have? (see our insurance guide).

Get it in Writing

When you have found the right place and have decided the above details make sure you write a follow up email to the manager with everything that has been agreed clearly laid out. Ask the manager to reply saying that they are happy with this. It's really important that you do this as it ensures transparency and avoids problems arising from miscommunication later in the planning of the event.

STEP 6. DESIGN THE EVENT

You will need some form of printed publicity to let people know about the event. These can be designed and printed by Think about the specific needs of your community. If you are in an area with a significant Islamic population you should provide halal meat and cook it on a separate barbecue to any pork products you are barbecuing. Similarly, you should ensure you have kosher meat in an area with a high Jewish population. Ensure you have a vegetarian option available too. If you live in an agricultural area, think about sourcing your food and drink locally as this will enable you to support the business of someone in the community.

Think about what drinks you want to provide. How will you keep them cool if it's a sunny day?

Think about when is the right time of day for the people you are trying to reach. Think about how long you want to be there and what activities would complement the barbecue in your area.

If you are expecting families with children, then a bouncy castle, face paints, craft table and games would work well. For a teenage crowd you could get in a Christian rapper or a footballing freestyler to attract the crowds. For a more adult group, you could bring in some chilled out music for people to listen to. This aspect of the day is important as it will dictate how much opportunity your church members will have to interact with people and how much you will be able to display Christian community through the event.

If you want people to stay around and chat it would be good to have plenty of seats. If you do not have enough chairs or tables yourself think about who you could ask to borrow them from. If you need hundreds of chairs you may want to consider hiring them for the day.

If you are cooking food for more than about 30 people, it is advisable to have more than one barbecue going, especially if they are smaller ones. It's fine to have people waiting for a short while, as this will provide more opportunities to chat, but people will not want to wait more than about 10 minutes for their food.

Other Practicalities

If you are filling in a council application for this event you will need to have a plan for all of the following. However, even if you are using private property it is still worth thinking about them. For more details on how to build a policy about these have a look at our council applications document.

Toilets: Where are the nearest toilets? How many are there? How accessible are they?

Emergency Planning: Let the police and fire service know that the event is happening. Have a look around and make sure there is a safe place for them to park should they need to. Have a chain of command in place so that everyone knows who's in charge in an emergency. Make sure you have qualified first aiders and fire extinguishers on site.

Children: Adhere to your church's child protection policy. If you don't have one visit <http://www.ccpas.co.uk/>. In addition to this, have a plan for what happens if a parent loses a child during your event.

Legality and Licensing

Most venues are registered for entertainment. However, if the venue does not have an entertainment licence you will need to obtain a Temporary Event Notice (TEN). These cost £21 and must be obtained at least 10 days before the event. You should have public liability insurance for this event. See our Insurance document for more information. The person in charge of providing food should also have a food safety certificate. These are possible to obtain in just a one day course if you do not already have someone in your community who has one. If you are playing live or recorded music, you may also need licences for this. All information on licensing is available in our Licensing document.

STEP 7. PUBLICITY

For a local street barbecue, write invitation cards to deliver to your neighbours. If it's possible for you to actually speak to your neighbours and give them a personal invite this is preferable.

For a big community barbecue, publicity should probably be released between 3 and 4 weeks before the event. Make sure you get the flyer designed by someone who is able to produce a professional standard of work. The quality of the flyer will indicate to the recipient the quality of the event they are attending. Examples and help with flyers are available on our website.

Make sure the flyer clearly states the date, time, location and price (if there is one) of the event. If there is a website or social media platform for the event make sure this is also included on the flyer. Be sure to communicate who is running the event.

Make sure the flyer is a true representation of the content of the event. This means taking care not to advertise the event as just a free barbecue and neglect to mention that you intend to include a 30 minute preaching slot. It is important to be honest with the public and let them know exactly what they are signing up for!

Places to distribute flyers/posters

- Door-to-door. Get a group from the church to post them in houses in the local area. Avoid doors that say "no junk mail". Even though I'm sure you do not consider it to be "junk", it's important to respect their right to disagree!
- Ask local shops if they are willing to put a poster in their window or to keep some flyers by the till.
- Put flyers/posters up on community notice boards.
- Give flyers to schools to put in children's book bags.

Get local churches to put the event in their news bulletin and give out flyers. Encourage church members to bring friends to the event.

Other publicity

- Use the internet, it offers you free publicity! If you have access to any local/church websites make sure the event is listed there. Also upload the event to any online local community calendars you can find - your council probably hosts one and there may well be others too.
- Use social media, set up a Facebook group or get local tweeters tweeting about your event.
- Let the local press know. Write a short press release about what you will be doing. Send it to your local papers or local news websites. Within 24 hours of the event send another press release about how the event went and include pictures. This will help promote the positive work the church is doing in your community.
- Make sure you've registered your event properly so that it appears on thebiggestbirthdaypartyever.com. Don't forget to make use of the resources available from our website to make a real visible presence on the day.

STEP 8. VOLUNTEERS

To help with the smooth running of the event it would be good to have lots of volunteers. If you don't have

enough you could go to local churches at least 6 weeks before the event and invite people to get signed up. Depending on the size of the event, you will need at least four or five volunteers to help with serving food, two to manage clearing up of waste and a few to chat to and welcome people. If you have further activities, ideally you should have two or three volunteers for each activity you are running.

STEP 9. ON THE DAY

- Here's a list of things to do on the day to ensure a smooth running event.
- Before the start get in touch with anyone bringing things to the event to make sure they're on their way.
- Make sure you have all the food and drink you need.
- Make sure you have plenty of waste bags for rubbish
- Get the whole team there early to set up. Give yourself lots of time to get everything ready.
- Call a team meeting. Register volunteers and make sure everyone knows the chain of command,
- Who first aiders are and where to go if there's a fire.
- Once everything is set up risk assess the venue using the form from our website.
- Keep an eye on food levels throughout the event so you know if you're running out of anything.
- At the end of the event make sure you clean up thoroughly and leave the site as you found it.
- Thank all the volunteers.

How to share the meaning behind the party!

You'll want to make sure that people don't just go away having enjoyed the event but that they've also been challenged or intrigued about the Christian faith. By giving away free food you are already showing that God is a generous God. It is likely that people will ask you why you are doing this. Make sure church members are prepared to give an answer to this question.

Here are some other ways you can share the meaning behind the party

Give out free cake as part of your event, in celebration of Pentecost, the birthday of the worldwide Church. If people ask questions you could also give them the Biggest Birthday Ever Gospel tract.

When planning entertainment to coincide with the barbecue, think about choosing some live music or a theatre performance that communicates about God in an engaging way.

What events will your church or local churches be putting on in the near future? Use this event as an opportunity to profile the local church and invite people along to other things the Church is doing in your community.

STEP 10. WRAP UP AND IMPLEMENT FOLLOW UP

It's important that this event fits into a wider context of mission. Therefore, get feedback from everyone involved about how they thought the event went. You could ask them to respond to three simple questions:

What did you like about the event?

What did you think could have been done better?

If we were to run the event again what changes would you suggest?

You could also ask people to leave contact details if they would like you to let them know about similar events in the future. Have a plan in place for your next event so that you can build on the good work you've begun.

What if... .

it rains or is really hot?

In both of these circumstances you will need to temporary shelter/shade available. A strong gazebo should be enough, although they are harder to secure on firmer ground. If you are using your church grounds you could also open the doors and allow everyone to go inside to eat their food to get out of the rain. For a really hot day make sure there is plenty of water available for volunteers.

MORE ABOUT SHARE JESUS INTERNATIONAL



SJI is passionate about communicating the good news about Jesus in our ever-changing times. SJI's work covers three main areas:

1. Missional Leaders – leadership development has long been a focus for SJI. Over the past ten years, our leadership development programmes have seen in excess of one thousand young people trained to serve God in their communities. Find more details on the FRESH programme here
2. Missional Festivals – in 2008 we hosted London's first Pentecost Festival with over one hundred events, many of them free, in the heart of London. Since then the Festival has grown by collaborating with a wide range of organisations and churches. Now we are also training churches to run local festivals in their communities
3. Missional Churches – planting missional expressions of church locally, SJI is working to equip churches across the UK to be missionally focussed

For more information please visit our website: www.sharejesusinternational.com

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