

Organizing a Disco Soup, step by step

Step 1 – Preparation: overall plan

Goal and Audience

The parameter you should define at the start of the organization phase is **how much food** you want to serve. It is important to clearly define the target amount and stick to it, because this simplifies the preparation, helps in structuring the tasks and clarifies communication of the message (for example, deciding what to write on your flyers, Facebook posts, and what you tell interested parties and the press when they ask you what you are doing).

Think about **whom you want to reach** and what's the best **place** to do that.

In making people want to eat waste, **make sure the message is clear** that we don't actually use veggies that have been thrown out, but that we 'rescue' them right before that.

Think about what you want to organize, it doesn't have to be a Disco "Soup": you could make a Disco Salad, Disco Barbecue, DiscoTea, Disco Cocktail ... And, of course, you can play any music you like ;)

Team

You need to create an Initial team that will share among themselves all the tasks for the preparation of a Disco Soup:

- Someone needs to be in charge of coordination, logistics and production
 - Others should take care of all that is needed to obtain a location
 - Others should assist with the contacting of potential waste-suppliers (it should be someone who is good at communication and can easily make them feel comfortable and understand why they should help out: negotiating with them is very important and can take some time. You need to make sure they're happy with the arrangement. Some suppliers will help you with great enthusiasm; others -mainly large companies- might hesitate a little more. Especially if you need a lot of waste, the latter are the ones you're likely to encounter)
 - Others should take care of retrieving all the cooking and eating tools you need
 - Others should deal with finding a DJ and music
 - Others should take care of the promotion of the event
 - It's also good that some of you have a driving license
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Network

Especially when your budget is small, working together with other organizations is important. Great synergies can be created through cooperation (for instance, when you hold your disco at a street fair or an established cultural festival). This simplifies finding a location and everything you will need. Also, partnerships with the music business are obviously great for find the right DJ and getting a good sound system.

Funding

Before you make any unnecessary costs, think about what **stuff you can borrow or better yet, get for free**.

A lot of the cooking gear, for instance, could be borrowed from befriended chefs' kitchens or catering companies. For the smaller stuff you can also try writing or calling some stores to see if they want to sponsor the event. Remember, you're not doing something for yourself which is just fun, you're spreading a message most people agree with. So, a lot of companies will not mind being associated (for example, in Amsterdam they got a set of small knives, big ones and peelers all for free, because the store-owner loved the initiative. Another one gave them 5000(!) cradle-to-cradle napkins). Especially companies that are already in the 'green' segment will be interested in helping out. You're working for a non-profit organization, so they'll respect that your funds are limited.

Be careful: a danger here is letting your message get overshadowed or confused by a partnership. One thing to keep in mind, is that big(ger) companies could want to use your campaign as free publicity. Make sure if you allow this, that the companies have a good reputation and are not just using you for green washing their image. But what's always a good middle way is to offer mentioning their name, but only after the event as a thank you. Then you can give as much exposure to them as you like.

If you do end up paying for stuff, there are always some funds you can try to get. Local governments might like your idea, or maybe a NGO is willing to contribute or work together with you. You could also try to incorporate the Disco Soup as part of a bigger event. That will save you a lot of stuff having to be taken care of, like permits and hiring of electricity (if you need it) and other things.

Location

What you'll need to get first is a location. In looking for a place, think about the logistics:

- Is it **easy to reach**? (both for you and for the audience)
- Are you're **allowed to serve food** there, have (alcoholic) drinks **and play music**?
- Are there **already things you can use**? (working tables, refrigerators, crates...)

All of these are not necessary, but can save you a lot of work.

To make your event especially effective in reaching the media, choose a **very public and especially unusual location**. Great locations include holding the event in outdoor pedestrian malls, in front of a local public building, a traffic island or at a festival, county fair, or concert. Note that the larger and more interesting you make the location, the more time you will probably need to schedule for obtaining all the necessary permissions from local authorities to hold a public event, as this often can take longer than you wish. Choose your location and apply for permits as soon as possible!

Try to go and see the place where you're doing the event and make a **plan of how you want the place to look**. Make a simple overview of where all the tables are supposed to be, where the DJ's will be and consider a good route for getting the chopped veggies to the 'kitchen' area.

Promotion

To make sure there's a lot of people coming, be sure to **communicate things way in advance**.

Use every tool at your disposal for this: Facebook, Twitter, websites, blogs, flyers, posters... and remember to take advantage of any resources your partners may have. Obviously social media and your own website would perfectly work, but it's also good to spread the word to some local news TV channels, newspapers and radio stations through a proper press release. The *Disco Soupe Crew* can assist you in getting your message across to the press.

Another thing you can try is get your local politicians excited, maybe even to come and speak at the event. That's a good way of getting them to take action against food waste themselves as well, as they can see how many people are doing something about it.

You can use the exposure to talk about the message and reason for doing the event in more depth than you can at the event itself. And you can make sure a lot of people come!

Plan for dealing with (food) waste

It might sound weird, but you're always going to have some waste. Whether cuttings or leftovers, it's crucial to **have a good destination**. Obviously, cuttings and scraps can go to animal feed. See if there's a (city-) farm nearby which wants your waste.

Make an arrangement with a nearby Food bank or Salvation Army to bring your leftovers. They'll prefer fresh foods, but if you can cool your leftovers to a low temperature and package them properly, they'll take them from you with pleasure. Ask them what they want and make sure you can bring the food there after the event, so really nothing gets wasted.

Step 2 – Production: everything you'll need to get

Food

Unsold food includes fruit and vegetables that are poorly calibrated according to current qualitative categories; that have been damaged during transportation; that have not been harvested due to a lack of help in the field during major harvesting periods; that do not correspond to the demands of specific clients, such as restaurants and hotels.

Where to get it? **Supermarkets**, and especially **wholesalers**, will have lots of waste that is mostly clean and/or pre-packaged. An **open air marketplace** is also a good place, as there are a lot of different vendors with different things.

You won't find wasted food at consumer associations that organize bulk delivery by local producers of organic fruit and vegetables on set dates, and from other associations that bypass distributors and sell produce directly from producer to consumer. Their purpose is 100% no waste (but they can be great friends to invite to Disco Soups!).

You can also try to see if you can go to some **farmers'** fields and pick up what they left behind. This is called gleaning, and can be very effective if you need large amounts of the same kinds of veggies. The largest variety of substandard products is available during harvest times in spring, summer and fall. In winter, acquiring them is a bit more difficult—alternatively you can ask wholesale markets, supermarkets or farmer's markets. They might even have sorted ones that were too big or small already collected. Call them in advance; this increases your chances of an efficient pick-up. But if you have the time, it's also a nice field trip for whoever is interested. You get to be out, meet the farmer and do some honest cropping work.

Within the amount you get, try making sure you have a **good division of different kinds of veggies**. A good thing is to try and make a third of your veggies consist of potatoes or corn (or anything starchy) to make to dish a little filling.

It's also good to get at least part of the veggies which only need a little amount of washing, such as tomatoes. Others like potatoes and carrots take a lot of washing and this will take up a lot of time.

It's hard to set guidelines as you'll always be dependent on what you get, but when you go and 'shop' for waste, you can try to think about what is and what isn't good. For instance, aubergines will not be very good if you only boil them in a soup. On the other hand, the leaves of some cabbages are not great by themselves but might be really tasty if you'd cook them for a long time. So think a little about your recipe and the dish(es) you're making.

Always ask to see if there are some dried or canned goods that suppliers would otherwise throw away (for instance canned tomato puree, or coconut milk, or dried herbs). All of that can provide some nice extra flavour! It's a good idea to invest in this, even if it's not waste. One bottle of good olive oil for instance, can make an entire salad made of waste taste incredible. You will also need some salt and pepper, obviously.

Tip: For reasons of food safety, we advise avoiding meat and milk products

Another thing would be to see **how much work all of the preparation takes**; some bigger carrots only need one peeling, whilst beans will have to be taken out of their pods and you lose a lot of volume. But then, that only matters when you're doing large amounts.

There's always the option to **divide the dishes you're serving**. You can also make a Disco Salad if you don't have a way of cooking veggies or if you don't want to; or you can also make a small salad people can eat after the soup; or you could make some condiments like pepper-sauce that people can add to their soups.

A good idea is also to make water with lemons, herbs, cucumbers and other things to serve as drinks.

☆ Generally, the amount of kilograms of food you need is the *amount of visitors divided by five*.

An example of a **soup recipe**, based on using 500 kg of veggies would be:

150 kg Potatoes

80kg Kale

100kg Carrots

50kg Tomatoes

50kg Cauliflower

50kg Zucchini

10 kg Onions

5 kg Garlic

5 kg fresh herbs

Dice and cook

For this job you need the right tools. You can often **borrow** specialized cooking equipment from school cafeterias, company lunchrooms, mobile soup kitchens or community centers, or from fire departments. Depending on where you are, you can see what's already there (make sure you get in contact with the manager) and what else you need to be there on Disco Soup day (or preferably the day before). If you cannot find anyone to loan it to you, you can always rent such equipment from a catering service.

Tip: Find a sponsor that supports you through providing a mobile kitchen, or catering equipment.

*Here's a list of the **tools** you'll need:*

- Working tables (comfortable height, +/- 90cm)
- Cutting Boards
- Cloths to wet and put under your cutting boards
- Knives (mostly small, but a few big ones are good to have on hand as well)
- Peelers
- Kitchen towels

- Buckets for washing the veggies (you can also use crates with (inlay)bags put inside of them)
- Access to water (make sure there's a way to get water to where you need it, either with buckets or with a garden hose)
- Vinegar (good to add a few drops to the washing water to help keep the veggies fresh)
- Nail brushes / Steel brushes to wash veggies
- Strainers / Salad Spinners
- Crates for storing, possibly with plastic inlay-bags in them
- A kart to transport veggies that have been cut
- Bins for trash (both for plastics and compost)
- Stoves (one or two big ones, or multiple smaller ones. Electric ones are easy but can be unreliable. For gas burners you also need gas tanks)
- Pots and pans (make sure they fit on the stove, some big stoves don't fit a lot of regular size pans. Also, check that the material is good for electric stoves, if you're using those)
- Ladles (to stir and serve)
- Disposables or reusable materials to serve the food (bowls and plates, spoons and forks)
- Tables for everyone (or partially) to sit at and eat
- Hygiene pack: Paper towels, hand soap, hand towels, dishwashing soap, band aids, gloves, hairnets
- Handicraft pack: Markers, paper, tape (thick), rope
- Special shirts to make Disco Soup team recognizable
- Some sugary snacks for volunteers

In case you're outside:

- Tents to cover everything
- Ponchos for everyone coming

People

As soon as you have an outline and dates for your disco, you should begin mobilizing volunteers, because you will need a lot of **helping hands!** For example people to *drive and pick up the vegetables, cooks, dishwashers, people to help set up beforehand and to help clean up afterwards*. On the day of the Disco Soup, you'll need a team of people that know all of the plans and can help make everything go smooth. Your team can guide the volunteers and attendees, delegating clear and concise instructions (the washing and cutting, which is the brunt of the work, partially be covered by the attendees themselves).

A good measurement for how much **time you need** to cut everything is around 18 hours per 100 kg for 1 person. So divide it by that when you're planning: if you want to feed 500 people, you need 100 kg's of veggies, and you have 4 hours, so you'll need around 5 people. If you want to do it in 2 hours, you need 10. This is an estimate, and by no means exact, but it should give you an idea of how much time you would need if everyone is working at maximum speed. Keep in mind though; you'd

rather have twice as many people there so everybody can spend half his or her time dancing and enjoying themselves.

Other main tasks you'll have are:

- Chef Cooking the Soup/Salad (they also make some snacks/food for attendees in the meanwhile)
- Head of logistics (where is the food, where does it go)
- Head of a table(s) (everything going smooth and efficient)
- Head of cleaning (while working, but especially afterwards)
- Someone in charge of music/equipment (preferably the DJ)

These tasks are not all 'full-time', so a good idea is to make sure that the whole Disco Soup team is divided over the tables, so they can monitor the turns and that everything is going smooth. The head of the team should not have any specific tasks, as it will be his or her job to sort out any problems and make sure everyone is doing alright, keep track of the time and so on.

Sometimes, there might not be something to do. Which is fine...as long as you keep dancing wherever you are!

Music

Get some DJs excited. They make the whole thing into a party and it's great if you can find a few that are supporting the cause and would really like to come and spin. The right beats give the dicers the rhythm to do their work and give the event its **atmosphere**.

The easiest way of course is simply bringing a boom box or a laptop, but for those who need things a bit louder, a **DJ** is the way to go. Many even big name DJs will volunteer their services for a good cause, if not only for the reason that such an event also gives them good press. Ask around, and somebody in your group will at least know someone; or simply approach a local event company or talent agency. Remember to not overlook the possibilities for working together with musicians and promoters: the potential mutually beneficial partnerships in this area are endless.

Decor

You need to **make everything look nice**. Make sure you show people what it is you're doing, what organization(s) is responsible for it and where people can go for more information (online, but also at the event itself). Make sure you have visible logo's and promo materials for SFYN, as it will be a good place to get new members and volunteers for future events.

Obviously, a good theme for everything is **Disco**; disco balls, lots of colours, lights. See what you can find, or find some creative handymen in your network to build you cool stuff.

Document your Disco!

It's also really important to **capture the event** properly. Get one or two good **photographers**, to report whole thing. Even better is if you can also find someone who want to shoot some **film**. That's always the best medium to promote your event afterwards and get people excited to come to new

ones. Photos and videos make your event visible for people who cannot attend, about 99 percent of everybody. Get yourselves a good camera, or better, involve a photographer – maybe a photography student or even a professional photographer. Good quality photos will further help you bring your happening alive for people.

Documenting every step of the project also helps you remember what went right and what you could be better for the next time around.

Logistics before the event

Make a **schedule** of the **things you need** and **by when** you need them. You will use it within your team and you could send it to external people to ask for help!

It is important to make sure every party involved is committed to actually making sure the waste is there when you need it. First off, you'll need to get the **waste collected** in a central space, preferably refrigerated. Try arranging someone who can drive and a car to get everything in the same morning or on the day before.

Also, it's good to **check with volunteers** again, to know that they're still coming. The same goes for **parties which lend you things** and such, as they don't have proper booking systems and might forget.

Step 3 – Delivery: the day of the event

Logistics on the event itself

See what the things are you can **do beforehand**. This means sorting the gear you will be using, maybe sorting some vegetables in different crates, set up a washing station.

Make sure you've got a good **time-plan** laid out before you start. This will help everyone involved to get a clear picture of what needs to be done. It also makes it easier to see when to start and how much time you'll ask of your team, as it will be more than the actual event will take. Get there on time, make an inventory of what needs to happen and then sit down with your team to talk through the plan for the day.

1. Start by *setting up the pots* in which you're going to boil the soup, fill them with water and get that to a rolling boil. This will take a lot of time so doing this right away ensures you have boiling water when the first veggies are done.
2. Then set up a *washing station* and make sure whatever containers you're using start filling up with water (as this takes time, you can do other things in the meantime). Make sure nothing overflows though; keep an eye on it.
3. Set up the *tables* in the way thought up beforehand. At every space, lay a slightly wet cloth and put a cutting board on it. Make sure there's enough room in between the tables so that people can walk there, even with a person working on both sides. A good system is to have four or six places set up for cutting at either side, then at end you put the crates of veggies to be cut, on the

other side you can put empty crates to put the cut veggies in. Between the crates that aren't cut, next to that (so per two tables) you can have two bins, one for compost and one for plastic. This way you can have 'supply' lines going either to storage or to the kitchen.

4. Set up a *table for personal hygiene*, with water for people to wash their hands before they start, a bucket of water and soap to clean the tables and a bucket for paper towels and such. Maybe this could be a place to wash dishes as well (knives, peelers and cutting boards). Put paper towels on there and everything else people will need.
5. Set up a *Dj-booth*, either on a stage or just on a table. Get speakers set up next to that or wherever is the best place.

A few things to keep in mind during the event:

- ☆ Make sure you **stop cutting things on time**. It's easier to give away uncooked leftovers, so make sure you stop making more soup than you'll need. Also, the pans and everything need some time to cool. In the meantime, you can start with a bit of cleaning.
- ☆ Generally, **keep an eye on how much is left and how much time it's taking to do everything**. If you can choose to leave some things, you can pick the hard things that are a lot of work and instead get a lot of the 'easier' veggies done quickly.
- ☆ Every now and then, grab a microphone and **let people know they're doing a good job**. Tell them how far they are and maybe give them some extra encouragement to have a good time and dance. If that's necessary.

Plan for good Hygiene

It's crucial for the message we don't use thrown out waste in order to preserve some hygiene standards. If someone would get sick, which would be very harmful for the message we're spreading. Therefore it is really important to make sure all the preparation is done in a safe, clean way.

- **Everybody washes their hands before** start doing anything, and do this as much as possible in between actions
- Regularly **clean the knives, cutting boards and tables**
- Make sure everyone that has wounds or cuts themselves wears proper **band aids and plastic gloves**
- Properly **wash the vegetables and keep them refrigerated** as much as possible. You can use a little vinegar in the washing water to assure extra freshness. Also make sure to discard any veggies that are too far gone, or cut off the bad parts. They can ruin the whole dish, so it's not worth using every tiny thing you find.

Remember, if you're doing a soup you have an extra safeguard since you're cooking everything, but it's always good to be cautious.

Cleaning up

Really helpful is to have a **plan** for cleaning, so that you know where everything goes (on location), and for instance what to load into a car first and last so you can have an efficient run getting everything back where it came from.

Make good arrangements with the place you're organizing the Disco Soup, if you want to leave stuff there overnight or even a couple of days. Make sure you know who is responsible and that they know you. Keep in mind it's always nice to return stuff as soon as possible, as it'll save you having to come back and everything. Plan sometime in the days after the event, to make sure all of your stuff gets back where it belongs. Maybe you need to check with the place if everything is cleaned up properly and all the stuff is gone.

It's also good to take some time to **thank your volunteers and especially suppliers and sponsors**. Maybe they'll be in for sponsoring you in the long run, so always follow up with a nice email/call/visit. Then sit back, relax a bit and be proud of yourself and look at the pictures and movie. And show them to everyone!

Step 4 – Aftermath: don't stop now!

Very often after your Disco you will get a flood of people wanting to contact your group asking questions, people inspired by your event that want to get involved. **Channel this momentum!** Immediately after a disco is the perfect time to put together ideas for further projects or events concerning food waste, and vice versa.