

OPEN TABLE

Volunteer Handbook



What is Open Table?

Open Table is an independent not-for-profit organisation that shares free food with the community utilising surplus food in order to reduce food insecurity and food waste.

Open Table formed in 2013 as a bunch of like minded volunteers hosting free monthly community dinners at the Brunswick Neighbourhood House. The collective aim of bringing people together to share a meal and talk about shared experiences of place, food and culture quickly caught on. As Open Table expanded, so too has its volunteer base grown and is a highly valued and crucial part of Open Table's operations.

Open Table strives to create inclusive events where people from across the local community are welcome — in particular those who are marginalised from the mainstream. We partner with other community organisations as well as our wonder volunteers to achieve great community connectedness.

Our Volunteers

Open Table exists thanks to the energy, time and ideas contributed by its volunteers. Volunteers are crucial to achieving our objectives. Open Table greatly values the contribution of its volunteers, and cares for its volunteers' wellbeing and enjoyment of their involvement with the organisation.

Our Mission

Specifically, our mission is to:

- **Provide** consistent and reliable access to healthy food for people experiencing disadvantage
- **Transform** produce that would have otherwise gone to waste into free healthy food to share
- **Connect** diverse groups through inclusive community food projects
- **Collaborate** with volunteers and local community partners
- **Empower** others to reduce their food waste through education programs and events

Why we focus on food security

Being food secure means at all times, having physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets our food preferences and needs for a healthy life.

It is estimated that 1 in 20 Australians are food insecure. Those who experience food insecurity are often marginalised from the wider community. Food insecurity affects a wider range of groups including unemployed people, single parent households, low-income earners, rental households, young people, Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and socially isolated people. often addressed through the donation of food, which skips the important link between food security and community.

Open Table's approach to food relief is to provide choice from a variety of free healthy and fresh food. We also aim to provide a social and welcoming space to everyone regardless of their background.

Why we use food waste

Globally 30% of food is wasted globally across the supply chain, contributing 8% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste were a country, it would come in third after the United States and China in terms of impact on global warming.

In Australia we throw away \$8 billion worth of edible food each year. That's not egg shells or banana skins, it's edible food that for a multitude of reasons doesn't end up eaten.

- 40% of fruits and veggies grown in Australia never make it to the supermarket or grocery shelf.
- Another 1 in 5 grocery bags of food that Victorian households buy goes straight to the bin.

Once in landfill, food waste breaks down and emits greenhouse gases, including not only carbon dioxide (CO₂) but methane (CH₄) – a gas 25 times more potent than CO₂.

At Open Table, we want to be a part of the solution. Even though the food we are able to redistribute is only a drop in the ocean, we want to continue to show that food “waste” is a

valuable resource, that this food is nutritious and can make a positive impact on food insecurity in our communities.

Where does the food come from?

The majority of our food sourced from our food rescue partners; Foodbank Victoria, SecondBite and Ozharvest. We also get donated surplus food directly from local businesses and community gardens. The food we get donated is different every week, usually delivered a day before each event.

Zero Waste

At Open Table we strive towards zero waste. This means all food scraps are composted or put in food waste bins, soft plastics are kept separate and taken to recycling centres, we reuse containers where possible. Our volunteers help us with our zero waste mission.

Event Schedule

Open Table hosts several free community lunches and free food markets each month. We are continually adding to our events, for an up-to-date list see our website:

www.open-table.org/events

Volunteer Rosters

When applying to volunteer with us, we ask your preferences for how often and at which location you would like to volunteer with us. The Manager then adds you to the set monthly roster. You will have the same shifts each month unless you notify us otherwise.

If you need to change or cancel your shift please let us know as soon as possible by contacting our General Manager on 0403 218 123 or angela@open-table.org

Please note: any future shifts may be cancelled if a volunteer doesn't show up for a shift without notifying us prior.

Volunteer tasks

Each volunteer will be provided with a detailed description of their role and key tasks via a separate role description. General tasks for all Open Table volunteers are:

- Communicate availability and preferred location via 'Volunteer Enquiry' form
- Attend a 'Volunteer induction' session before first volunteer shift
- Read, understand and sign the relevant 'Volunteer Role Description and Agreement'
- Confirm volunteer shifts with Open Table managers
- Report to the Lead Cook at the commencement of a shift and undertake tasks as directed
- Comply with Open Table's policies, procedures and safety practices

Food Safety and Hygiene Practices

At each of our community events is trained as a food safety supervisor and will provide advice and guidance with any food safety concerns. As Open Table is a charitable organisation which provides free food to the community, we are provided indemnity by Victorian legislation regarding any illness that may arise or be passed on through our food. It is nonetheless extremely important that we take the same precautions as for food that is prepared to be sold:

- Take care when handling, storing packing and transporting food
- Store food in clean, covered food-grade containers.
- Store 'at-risk' foods, such as dairy, small goods or food that contain either, below 5 degrees or above 60 degrees. Food that has been left in the 'danger zone' (ie. between these temperatures) for more than 2 hours should be discarded.
- The highest standards of personal hygiene and cleanliness should be maintained at all times.

If all the food we receive is surplus food, are there any restrictions around what we can and can't use? Open Table makes exclusively vegetarian meals, due to the food safety risks with meat. Similarly, dairy past its expiry date (best before dates are okay) must not be used. Generally, if in doubt about the safety of a particular food, ask the lead cook, who is trained as a food safety supervisor. It is best not to use it if it seems risky - find another way of disposing of it as compost or chicken/worm food.