

Bread & Broth cooks meet weekly need to feed 100+

By Kathryn Reed

Looking at what little is left on plates and the fact many want seconds indicates two things – the food is good and the people are hungry.

Each Monday a cadre of volunteers puts together a nutritious, well-balanced meal for more than a 100 people. It's free – free to eat – not free to produce. Bread & Broth has no requirements when it comes to who dines. It's called a community meal.



Wendy David chops up melons for the Bread & Broth meal.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

Wendy David has been one of the cooks since the program started in 1989. The disadvantage she and other cooks have compared to restaurants is not being able to order what they want. Unlike restaurant chefs, they have to scramble and be creative with whatever is in the pantry and refrigerator or freezer.

It's a bit like "Chopped" on the Food Network where you don't know what is in the box, but you have a limited amount of time to create something edible from the mystery ingredients.

The judges in this case are the diners. Their thank yous and smiles are the reward for all the volunteers associated with Bread & Broth.

“We are always able to put something together. It may not be A-plus, but it’s always B-plus,” David said of the quality of meals. “My theory is if I didn’t want to eat it at home, why would I serve it to someone else?”



Linda Malzone has been volunteering at B&B for six years.

The head cooks for each Monday come in the Friday before to see what fresh food has been donated. Then they look in the freezer to see what should be pulled out to thaw.

For David’s August meal a ton of summer squash was in the fridge so she came up with a pasta primavera. It meant cutting squash from 12:30-2:30pm that day.

Recipes aren’t possible because all the ingredients aren’t likely to be on hand. David, like most of the cooks, doesn’t have a culinary background. Her experience comes from raising

four children and having a love for being in the kitchen.

Usually four cooks are assigned to each Monday, with other volunteers helping with setup, serving, cleanup, drinks, assembling take-home bags and whatever else is asked of them.

Claire Neville works alongside David in the kitchen. She believes it's important not to have stress in the kitchen, and to embrace the team approach.

"If we feed everyone and no one leaves hungry, we have accomplished our task," Neville said.

John Mauriello started as a sub for Bread & Broth and now works the first and fifth Mondays. He will do whatever is asked of him, but cooking is what he likes best.

Linda Malzone is cutting fresh melons on this particular Monday. She's been volunteering at Bread & Broth for the last six years. She told her husband, Earl Scilingo, how rewarding and fun it is. He's been working there for the last two years.



Nora Jones is happy to do anything but cook.

The cooks arrive at 12:30pm, the rest of the volunteers at 3pm, and diners at 4pm. Food is served until 5:30pm at Grace

Hall at St. Theresa Church (1401 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe). Cleanup is done by 6pm.

Usually it's Nora Jones, coordinator for the first Monday, who stays until every pot and pan is put in its place.

"Some of the patrons I've seen for 17 years. I just love them," Jones said. "There are a lot of dedicated people," she says of the volunteers.

In the past 23 years, the need for Bread & Broth has remained strong. The number of people coming this summer parallels that of 2011.

It is through donations that Bread & Broth is able to keep serving the weekly meals. Donations come in the form of money and food.

For \$250 people or companies may sponsor an Adopt-a-Day for \$250. This feeds more than 100 people. Then the company can bring up to five people to volunteer on that particular day. Tonight, *Lake Tahoe News* is sponsoring the Adopt-a-Day.

For more information about getting involved with Bread & Broth or to donate, contact Carol Gerard at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.