



Editor's Note: The Grow Food Party Crew currently operates in California, but is looking to expand to Massachusetts for Spring 2010. This playful approach to growing food and building community will inspire you to create vegetable gardens and edible landscaping in your own neighborhood!

Harvesting Abundance with the Grow Food Party Crew

by Dulanie Ellis

All across America, communities are reclaiming their food system. Stepping away from the fast-food, salad-in-a-bag, microwaved frozen dinner trend of the last several years, folks are stepping outside to their gardens instead, to pick vine-ripened tomatoes (that actually taste like tomato, with juice that runs down your hand) and snip leaves from fragrant basil and colorful squash to augment their dinners.

An ancient tradition is being rekindled – a tradition of social gardening and food exchanges. Having a vegetable garden may not be new, but the way they're being established in California's Ojai Valley offers a unique alternative to going it alone with a shovel.

The Grow Food Party Crew is designed like an old-fashioned barn raising, with lots of friends and neighbors, a potluck of dishes, pace-setting music and a party atmosphere. Vegetable gardens are created within two or three hours and a good time is had by all.



GFPC creates another vegetable garden.

In the past year, Party Crews have created over 40 vegetable gardens. Beginning one at a time, the Crews progressed to marathon planting days, digging in a dozen gardens in one day with teams of people.

Earlier this year, Massachusetts-based Commonwealth Financial Network visited the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa for their annual conference and sponsored a 16-garden day. They volunteered 20 employees and covered all the expenses so that low-income families could receive gardens. It was a spectacular success and an amazing show of corporate citizenship.

Garden parties with food exchanges are popping up, such as a recent "waffle party," where folks brought their fruit for toppings, and traded excess veggies, seeds and stories. Each season there's also a Tasting Social & Recipe Swap, where people bring one garden-fresh dish and 20 copies of the recipe to share.

Beyond the actual food, gardeners are harvesting an abundance of new friends as well as the childlike wonder that comes with the miracle of growing your own food. It sounds sappy, but it's so darned satisfying. Who needs the gym when you have a garden?

As autumn approaches, California gardeners will begin planting winter greens, salad makings, broccoli and root vegetable. Since West Coast summers are so beastly hot (90's to low 100's), fall gardens are nice for beginner gardeners. (And it's easier to drum up volunteers for double-digging the clay soil.)

Come join the party!



"Creating abundance while our buns dance!"

For more information, visit us at Grow Food Party Crew <http://growfoodpartycrew.ning.com>



Grow Food Party Crew is the new rage for planting Victory Gardens. See our short 7-minute film on YouTube.

Type in Grow Food Party Crew, and select "watch in high quality."

Many hands make light work for planting a vegetable garden when you invite friends, share a potluck and put on some funky tunes to get the party started.

Within the month the film should be available for sale and will include the 10-step guide on "How to Party Crew" and plan to start growing your own salad!

Purchase a high resolution, DVD copy of this video at our website <http://www.walkyourtalkproductions.com>

It's a great way to inspire friends to plant gardens and create abundance where you live!

On the East Coast, fall and winter are the perfect time for imagining...pouring over seed catalogues and meeting with prospective Party Crew members who will help create spring gardens on Cape Cod.

The wary or overscheduled family could plan a smallish 4'x10' plot. The bold and adventuresome can start planning a full-on food forest for their front yard, something that will tantalize neighbors to join in the fun.

No matter the size, all gardeners will experience the self-reliant pride that comes from rekindling our agricultural roots.

Dulanie Ellis is a documentary filmmaker whose films about agricultural issues have prompted her to become an Ag activist. She serves on the Ag Futures Alliance for Ventura County and is Chairperson for the Food & Agriculture committee of the Ojai Valley Green Coalition.



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