



# World Cafe

## Case Study

March 2012

Funded by Community Food and Health Scotland



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## Background and History of the World Cafe



Food is an integral part of life and sharing a meal can be seen as a welcoming into the customs and traditions of the culture of those who have prepared it and as a bonding experience to create friendships and a sense of community.

In August 2007, CORE (formerly Black Community Development Project) recognised this after a successful ‘Multicultural Open Day’ event demonstrated the enjoyment the community had while trying an exotic range of international dishes. This idea prompted a ‘World Cafe Group’ made up of volunteers to be established which aimed to improve the local community’s diet and cooking skills while also building social capital.

In November 2007 the first event was held, run by volunteers, on the last Friday of the month: a buffet evening that included foods from all over the world cooked by local people and created a friendly, family atmosphere in the North Edinburgh Community. This initiated the monthly event we all know as the World Cafe.

With sporadic pieces of funding to allow for the purchase of kitchen equipment, volunteer training, promotional material and ingredients, the World Cafe quickly became known and appreciated by the community. This success fuelled interest from other organisations and the reputation of the World Cafe spread.

The World Cafe often becomes involved in an assortment of projects, most recently of which has been joining the Edinburgh Community Cafes network. This group of cafes aims to use the power afforded to a larger organisation to promote a healthy diet across Edinburgh by forming an alliance between small individual cafes.

Despite small changes and improvements over the years, the aims and objectives have stayed the same – to promote community cohesion and encourage healthy eating practices in North Edinburgh.

This case study details the secrets to the World Cafe.

## Essential Elements of the World Cafe Model

There are several key elements which make this model work so well, but as with any event there are also things which can go wrong so learning from previous experience is essential.

### What makes it work?

#### *Volunteers*

First and foremost the reason the world cafe is so successful is its volunteers. They are its foundation - they are willing to help by dedicating their time and skills to bettering their community and encourage healthy eating. This is explained in more detail in the volunteer section of the case study, but the reciprocal relationship between CORE and the volunteers makes the cafe what it is.

#### *High standard of cuisine*

If customers enjoy the food they will come back, and hopefully bring their friends! The World Cafe tries to include a wide range of food so that all of our customers are happy with their meal, with second helping regularly being served and recipes requested.

#### *Inclusive of all*

It might seem obvious, but including everyone in our celebrations and being culturally sensitive is a huge part of the World Cafe's success. Simple acts such as using Halal meat when cooking but also allowing the consumption of alcohol to those who wish it go a long way. It allows any individual to join in and promotes a cohesive community rather than a segregated one.

#### *Other considerations*

On top of these main points, the World Cafe is also a monthly event rather than an everyday occurrence and as such, it may have a greater ability to cause excitement and give customers variety. It is relatively inexpensive so affordable, especially at the end of the month when wages have been received, and word of mouth and frequent promotion in the local area play a part in its success.

### Learning what not to do

#### *Trial and Error*

As with any venture, mistakes at some point are unavoidable. CORE has tried to streamline the process by making a checklist of tasks covering promotion and volunteer recruitment to stock checking and arranging petty cash for the event. This allows the most important aspects of the cafe to be checked off each month and lets the coordinator concentrate on arranging their own twist on the entertainment without worrying that some of the basics have been missed!

#### *Comments book*

Another good way of assessing the success of each event is to get feedback from the participants themselves, some of which we have included later in the case study. Using any criticism constructively is a must since the customer is always right!

## Volunteers: Roles, Recruitment & Training

### Roles

The roles for volunteers within the world cafe include Coordinator, Cook, Server, Cash handler, Dish washer and Entertainment and these roles regularly overlap. Often more than one role is fulfilled by a volunteer or a progression is made once more skills, knowledge and experience of the cafe has been gained. As well as looking great on a CV, volunteering roles should be reciprocal between the organisation and the individual, which is why CORE enjoys seeing members progress into paid employment and gaining new recruits to train regularly.



### Recruitment

There are many reasons people choose to volunteer at the World Cafe. Some may have been referred through CORE's employability project to gain experience in a specific skill such as kitchen work or cash handling or may have requested experience in the voluntary sector as part of a university course. Others may want to practise their English language skills, socialise with other local people or simply help out in their community. It is important when recruiting individuals to listen to what they want to get out of volunteering and find the right position for them within the team to ensure they enjoy their time with the cafe and want to continue coming back.

### Training

Once the volunteer's aims and goals have been established, training can be undertaken during and outside of World Cafe times depending on what is required. Through volunteering with the World Cafe, opportunities arise for both internal and external training. In house, CORE trains volunteers in skills such as cash handling and budgeting, MS Office skills necessary for poster production and the basics of event promotion and management. Outwith these, staff also facilitate the attendance of volunteers at REHIS and other useful



training sessions and assist with ILA applications for funding where necessary. CORE acting as an intermediary can be very important to the volunteers who may otherwise feel unsure about attending such courses as they may feel intimidated or lack confidence. Simple requests made by CORE on the individual's behalf such as indicating the volunteer may need a scribe for certain examinations or confirming that a dictionary is permitted throughout a course can push volunteers to reach their goals.

## Healthy Recipe Development



There are a variety of methods of developing the skills of your volunteers towards healthy eating, all of which are useful, but when used together may be seen to reinforce the learning in a positive way. Additionally, for the last 6 months the cafe has had input from a qualified public health nutritionist who has helped with the discussion and development of recipes and menu options, including an increase in fish as a source of protein in meals and decreased use of added salt, sugar and unnecessary fats during the cooking process.

### In discussion

At the World Cafe, staff and volunteers meet regularly to discuss the upcoming event and suggest menu options. Here discussions on what ingredients would be necessary and budget is considered, along with the nutritional content of the meal and how traditional foods can be made in a healthy way. This open communication allows for questions to be answered and natural interest to promote learning.

### In the classroom

As well as informal discussion, formal learning provides an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding at a sufficient level for certification, which looks great on a volunteer's CV. From the World Cafe, two volunteers recently sat and attained their REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene certificate and one volunteer sat and attained their REHIS Food and Health certificate. As well as being beneficial for the individual and the community attending the World Cafe events, an advantage of this is that the knowledge they have gained is passed on to other volunteers during the cooking process who can then gain more confidence in healthy practises and may also undertake the course to attain their own qualification.

### In the kitchen

A great way of learning is by 'doing', and this is another way that healthy eating practices can be demonstrated, learned and passed on. As mentioned, during the World Cafe events, volunteers cook together using their healthy eating techniques and learn from each other with a lead given to those who attended REHIS training sessions. By cooking with potentially unknown foods or methods, other volunteers' knowledge of healthier or better value alternatives to traditional foods is attained.



## Building Links in Individuals and Communities

A good relationship between individuals and the community in which they live is essential to creating a safe and fun living environment. This is of particular relevance when trying to integrate a diverse range of people into one society which may not have knowledge of or be accepting of different cultures or traditions. By celebrating many different festivals and encouraging an active interest in all ways of life, the World Cafe can be seen to build relationships by creating an open atmosphere where everyone attending the events can socialise, learn about other cultures and make friends in the local community so create a more inclusive North Edinburgh.



An important characteristic of the World Cafe is that the customers and volunteers include everyone from workers whose office is nearby and local families to Councillors and MSPs. This intermingling of such a wide range of the community prompts conversation between otherwise disparate groups that otherwise may not have met. The reduction of barriers in this way contributes to the feeling of acceptance and belonging necessary to build a thriving community.

As an example, one of CORE's clients who lacked confidence in social situations due to limited English language skills has become a volunteer at the World Cafe and formed strong friendships with other volunteers, as well as being less nervous in a busy community environment. This newfound confidence in her own abilities allows her to connect with others without apprehension and will improve her employability, which in turn will benefit the community as a whole.



## Participant feedback

Great idea, look forward to the next one.



I wish the World out there was like it is in here.

Thoroughly enjoyable, great food and great company



Food was delicious. Enjoyed it all & the very friendly atmosphere

Many thanks to CORE for asking me to help out at the last cafe. Had a great time and the food was fantastic.



A great event with a lovely atmosphere - Live Entertainment too! I look forward to returning :-)



The last World Cafe was wonderful. Food fantastic. I would thoroughly recommend it!



## Recipe for setting up a successful World Cafe

### Ingredients:

Volunteers	Venue	Target audience
Themes/festivals/celebrations	Publicity	Networking
Leadership	Teamwork	Friendly atmosphere
Great tasting, healthy food		

### Method:

#### *Step1 - Recruit and keep volunteers*

*Before the event*

As already discussed, the World Cafe would not exist without our amazing volunteers. Make sure you consider their needs as well as your own, or you could end up with none left... Match the skills and interests of each individual to the roles available and make sure they don't feel overwhelmed so they enjoy their cafe days and keep coming back!

#### *Step2 - Select a venue in your community*

*Before the event*

Try to choose a venue which is accessible to as much of your target population as possible. Obviously your budget is a consideration here, but also try to make sure it is somewhere that is seen as inviting and friendly to the people you are encouraging to attend. For example, a place of worship or a bar may have different barriers for different groups of people.

#### *Step3 - Decide on a relevant theme each month*

*Before the event*

By choosing current festivals and highlighting them in the community you can not only make each event a little bit special and unique, but you can also allow volunteers to share their beliefs and demonstrate their expertise first hand. This keeps the cafes interesting and can be great for involving the children, for example, by giving them Dragon masks at Chinese New Year.

#### *Step4 - Publicise the event*

*Before the event*

Use as many media sources as possible to promote the event such as posters, flyers, emailing, website posts and social networking sites. Make sure the information going out to local businesses and organisations is NOTICEABLE - no-one will attend the event if they don't know its on! You can do this by using eye catching, colourful designs and taking hard copies to places which will have a high volume of customers to ensure they don't get relegated to the 'Junk email' folder.

**Step5 - Network with others**

**Before the event**

By networking with other organisations, you can spread the word much farther and wider than you could alone, so make sure you ask your network to pass it on. Sometimes, other community services may be enthusiastic enough to want to get involved with the excitement of your event... libraries running kids clubs can involve the children by having them research the theme for that month's event such as Black History Month, or use 'arts and crafts' time to make relevant masks or hats. Your network can also lead to added opportunities for your volunteers and for your organisation such as additional healthy eating advice or REHIS training sessions. Collaborations between organisations often flourish from networking and can further promote upcoming cafe events.

**Step6 - Appoint a leader**

**On the day!**

Too many cooks really do spoil the broth, so make sure one volunteer is coordinating the event and that the others know their duties. This way, all tasks can be covered and if a question or issue arises, one individual can be sought out to answer or rectify the situation.

**Step7 - Work as a team**

**On the day!**

Teamwork is an invaluable life skill (and a must for the CV!) and at a cafe event, volunteers will definitely gain experience in this. Its about pulling together to complete the task at hand and learning from each other, while building the friendships that come from volunteering at a World Cafe.

**Step8 - Make tasty and diverse, but healthy food**

**On the day!**

We're not talking Michelin starred cuisine here... traditional home cooking from a variety of cultures makes for a veritable feast. Ensuring the cooks have the knowledge to make informed choices about adding salt, sugar and fats into their cooking has a knock on effect and encourages them to use these techniques at home. This also means that the customers of the cafe are getting a healthy meal with healthy ingredients which they otherwise may not have attempted due to expense or poor perception.

**Step9 - Smile!**

**On the day!**

Customers, volunteers and venue staff will always be more receptive to a happy, friendly attitude and it can even be contagious! By providing a fun and enjoyable atmosphere, people will be able to socialise and take pleasure in their time at the cafe, which results in a good evening and regular attendance!

**Repeat the above method until the community has formed a smooth, friendly blend of diverse cultures and ethnicities with improved diet, knowledge of healthy eating and confidence in their fellow man!**