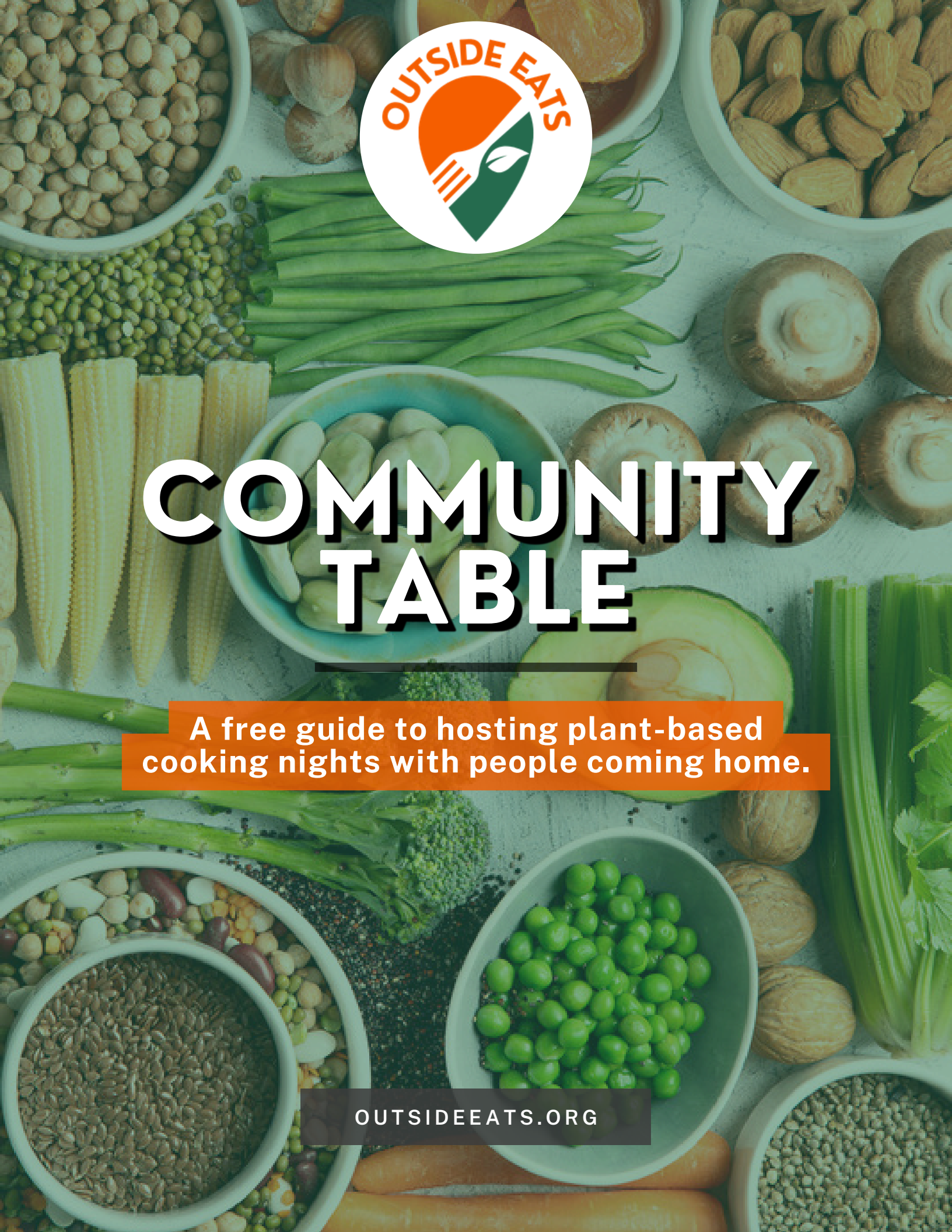

COMMUNITY TABLE

A free guide to hosting plant-based cooking nights with people coming home.

OUTSIDEEATS.ORG

WHY HOST

Cook together. Come back.

A shared meal is one of the easiest ways to welcome someone home.

Community Table is four cooking nights for people coming home, their families and neighbors. Each night teaches one low-cost, plant-based skill, then everyone cooks and eats together.

You do not need a professional kitchen or a big budget. A church hall, community room or halfway house kitchen works. This guide gives you the plan, the roles and the recipes.

Important: general educational information only. Follow your venue's food-safety rules and ask about allergies before every session.

THE COURSE

Four nights, one skill each.

NIGHT 1: PANTRY

LEARN:
Stock a $20 starter pantry
Read labels + unit prices

90 minutes

NIGHT 2: ONE POT

LEARN:
One-pot chili for 10
Batch + freeze
Store leftovers safely

90 minutes

NIGHT 3: GROW IT

LEARN:
Herbs on a windowsill
Find a community garden

90 minutes

NIGHT 4: STRETCH IT

LEARN:
Cook once, eat 3 ways
Use what's left
Plan next week's menu

90 minutes

MAKE IT YOURS

Run the four nights back to back, or one a month. Swap any recipe for food your neighbors already cook and love.

EVERY NIGHT ENDS WITH A MEAL

Cook together, then sit down and eat together. Send leftovers home in containers so no one leaves empty-handed.

EVENT PLANNER

6-week countdown

Start early. A few small steps each week keep the night easy.

- [ ] 6 weeks out: Book a space with a kitchen or big tables.
- [ ] 5 weeks out: Pick your night, time, and four dates.
- [ ] 4 weeks out: Recruit a host, cooks, greeter, and clean-up.
- [ ] 3 weeks out: Share flyers with halfway houses and reentry groups.
- [ ] 2 weeks out: Ask a local store or church to sponsor food.
- [ ] 1 week out: Shop the pantry list and print recipe cards.
- [ ] Day before: Set up stations, sign-in sheet, and containers.
- [ ] Night of: Cook, eat together, and ask for quick feedback.

TEAM ROLES

Who does what.

Four roles keep a Community Table running. One person can cover two.

HOST

BOOKS THE SPACE, KEEPS TIME, AND OPENS THE NIGHT WITH A WELCOME.

COOKS

LEAD THE RECIPE, ASSIGN STATIONS, AND TALK THROUGH EACH STEP OUT LOUD.

GREETER

Signs people in, makes introductions, and hands out recipe cards.

CLEAN-UP

Packs leftovers, washes up, and resets the room for next time.

AFTER EACH NIGHT

Write down what worked, who came, and what to cook next. Thank your volunteers and sponsors within 48 hours.

RECIPES FOR A CROWD

Night 1 recipes

Each recipe feeds about 10. Double it for a bigger group.

Big-Pot Beans + Rice

STOVETOP • 45 MIN

YOU NEED
- 3 lb rice
- 4 big cans beans
- 3 bags frozen vegetables
- 2 jars salsa + cumin

DO THIS
Cook rice in a big pot.
Simmer beans, veg + salsa 15 min.
Season and serve over rice.

OPTIONALLY:
Serve with tortillas or cornbread.

Rice Bowl Bar

STOVETOP • 30 MIN

YOU NEED
- 3 lb rice
- 2 bags stir-fry veg
- eggs, beans, or tofu
- soy sauce, hot sauce, lime

DO THIS
Cook rice, veg + protein.
Set out bowls and toppings.
Everyone builds their own.

OPTIONALLY:
Ask guests to bring a topping.

MAKE IT CHEAPER

Buy dried beans and rice in bulk, ask a local store to sponsor a night, and split leftovers into take-home containers.