

Organizing and Hosting a House Party for the ORGANIC CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION

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Hello from OCA Director Ronnie Cummins,

Hosting an educational house party in your community is a great way to help strengthen the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) and its growing national anti-genetic engineering (GE) foods network, the BioDemocracy Alliance. People volunteer their time or give money to non-profit organizations, not only because they believe in the cause, in this case organic agriculture, but also because someone like you asks them to support the cause! By organizing a house party this September, you will not only be able to see a powerful and motivational new documentary film, “The Future of Food,” and meet up with friends and like-minded people, you will also be connecting people in your local community up with a nationwide, indeed global, campaign for sustainability and BioDemocracy.

Hosting a House Party can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose. In this House Party Manual you’ll find out how to throw a successful house party from start to finish, with checklists, sign in sheets, sample invitations, flyers and more. The information in this packet is based on the experience of organizers and volunteers who have supported the OCA across the country.

Please keep in mind that the ideas in this manual are only suggestions. Feel free to organize your house party as you see fit. The important thing is to bring people together, see an inspiring film, and hopefully lay down the foundation for future network building and action in your community!

By joining hundreds of other OCA volunteers across the nation and organizing a house party this September, you are not only strengthening the nationwide anti-GE/pro-organic Movement, which OCA calls the BioDemocracy Alliance, but are also building up a community of concerned citizens who can work together on local and regional issues. Thank you for your involvement and efforts.



Regards and Solidarity,

Ronnie Cummins

Ronnie Cummins,
National Director
Organic Consumers Association
www.organicconsumers.org

House Party Tips

Invitations

Generally, only one out of four people who are invited to your house party will attend. The response rate is even lower (one of 10) if you use email only. The most effective way to get good attendance is to mail out invitations, and follow up a week later with a personal phone call. Five to seven days before the party, make a second reminder call. It will greatly increase the attendance at your party. OCA will be happy to email other organic consumers in your area to tell them about your house party, and can even supply phone numbers to you, if you wish, of organic consumers in your town or city who may be interested in attending.

- Be sure your invitations include the date, time, & address of the party. Include good directions to your house (a map is very useful).
- Include your phone number and email.
- Ask your guests to RSVP so you have an idea of how many people are coming.
- If you chose to make your house party a fundraiser, as well as an educational/motivational event, be direct in mentioning this in your invitation so that people know they will be asked to contribute to the Organic Consumers Association.

Preparations

- Consider asking a few friends or colleagues to help you plan. You can even list them as a "host committee" on the invitation to attract more people who will recognize the names.
- Send invitations in advance & ask for an RSVP.

Fundraising

- If you choose to include fundraising as part of your event, set a fundraising goal (\$100, \$200, \$500, etc.), and don't be afraid to ask for money. People will appreciate your appeal for a good cause!
- OCA can provide Coupon Books (\$400 in savings on organic products for only \$10) to help you raise funds. If you want to earmark funds raised for local projects, that's fine too.

Being Creative

- Your house party does not have to be only a screening of "The Future of Food." You could have an organic or GE-Free dinner or brunch; it can be an organic wine-tasting, organic chocolate-tasting, tea party, etc.
- The event can be in your home, or at a church or other community setting.

Cutting Costs

- Get organic food, drinks, etc. donated. You'd be surprised how many companies (restaurants, co-ops, natural food stores, etc) are willing to help.
- Have a 100% organic or GE-Free potluck with guests bringing the food.

Getting people to the party

- A week or so before the event, call people you haven't heard from to encourage them to come.
- A few days before the event, call those who have said they will come to remind them of the date and time and to make sure they have directions.

Call to Action

- Encourage people to get active. Your OCA house party kit will provide you with several options for people to get involved. You can also visit www.organicconsumers.org/action.htm for up-to-date action alerts and sample letters.
- Make sure to provide people with samples for the above advocacy activities.
- Make sure to encourage people to write the letters or sign the petitions at your event. If they take the materials home, they will likely forget to take action. Taking 10 minutes to write letters will allow you to send them yourself and to know how many you generated.

Sample Planning Timeline for a House Party/Fundraiser

To help you ensure a successful event, we've provided a sample timetable for a small to medium-sized house party/fundraiser. Keep in mind that depending on when your event takes place, its size and its type, your timetable will be different.

What you need:

- Name tags and markers
- A clipboard or two and pens for guests to sign in
- OCA materials

OCA materials provided:

- Video/DVD
- Orientation packets and GE-Free Zone guide
- Item for raffle (OCA tee shirt, OCA shopping bag, etc.)

When you decide you want to host an event:

- Determine the where, when, who, why and what of the event.
- Write out an action plan and a to-do list.
- Create invitation list.
- Arrange for a friend to help or develop a committee.

Two weeks before:

- Mail invitations with directions and a request for RSVP.
- Reserve any necessary equipment.

One to two weeks before:

- Plan the meal or refreshments.
- Purchase beverages and supplies.
- Prepare your own presentation or remarks.
- Make sure all guests have directions.

One to five days before:

- Obtain rented or borrowed equipment.
- Prepare make-ahead food.
- Set up the beverage area.

Day of event: The Party!

- Welcome guests, allow guests to mingle for 15-30 minutes.
- Welcome and Introductions (10-20 minutes).
- Show *The Future of Food* film or selected segments.
- Guests' reactions to the video/Q&A (10-20 minutes).
- Call to Action: Ask guests if they are interested in contributing either time or money to the BioDemocracy Alliance Campaign (15 minutes)
- Ask for additional house party hosts, volunteers, endorsements (5 minutes)
- Make sure everyone has signed in —pass around sign in sheet again.
- Thank guests for coming, wrap up (5 minutes).

Follow Up

- Make a copy of your Sign-in Sheet for local use
- Mail your completed Evaluation Form and your Sign-in Sheet.
- Send thank you notes to your guests.

One week after the party

- Follow up with guests who indicated they would send donations themselves.

Sample Invitations

Dear Friends,

You are cordially invited to a house party co-sponsored by _____ and the Organic Consumers Association (OCA). We will be screening the award winning film, *The Future of Food*.

This event/meet up is an educational & network-building project for the OCA's BioDemocracy Alliance Campaign: Creating Genetically Engineered (GE)-Free Zones Across the Americas.

Bring your questions, ideas, and, if you are willing to make a donation, your checkbook!

Where: _____

When: _____

What: 10-20 people, food and beverages, a 30-60 minute DVD or video, discussion of the issues, and a request for contributions to spread help spread the word about organic food and agriculture.

I can't come, but enclosed is my donation of _____

Please RSVP to: _____

Directions: [visit www.mapquest.com to include a map to your house party]

Sample Thank You Note

Dear [first name],

Thank you for your generous \$ _____ donation to the Organic Consumers Association.

We are supporting the OCA's BioDemocracy Alliance Campaign because it provides a concrete opportunity for citizens to enact real changes for local, sustainable, organic food, fiber and body care. A grassroots campaign like ours, with thousands of volunteers, relies on donors like you. The BioDemocracy Alliance campaign demonstrates that people power is the driving force in our crusade of "organics for everyone."

We hope you will continue to support the OCA's BioDemocracy Alliance campaign by volunteering and spreading the word to your family and friends. If you need further information regarding volunteering or hosting a house party, please call the OCA national Office at 218-226-4164.

Looking forward to working with you in the organic movement!

Sincerely,

Frequently Asked Questions About Your House Party

I am not an expert on organic food and agriculture. What should I do to get ready for the house party?

We don't expect you to be an expert on genetic engineering or organic food and agriculture. The video and the campaign literature speak for itself. You are a concerned citizen who supports local, sustainable, organic food, fiber and body care products. While we have some background information for you, please don't feel you have to know everything about the OCA's campaigns to host a party.

To familiarize yourself with questions that might come up, you might want to:

- Review the orientation packet.
- Watch the video before the party so you know the key messages.
- If you need more information on a specific issue, visit www.organicconsumers.org
- Think about why you support the work of the OCA - write a few paragraphs so you can share your passion and excitement with those who attend the party.
- If someone asks a question that you do not know the answer to, don't worry about it. The concerned person can contact the website or house party coordinator for more information.

How can I keep track of all the questions my guests have concerns about?

It's impossible for one person to run the party and also keep track of what's going on. Have a "team" member take notes, so people's questions are answered to the best of your ability. Also, if there are funny moments or stories that really move you, your team member can make sure these are jotted down so they can be shared with us and passed on to everyone else.

Sample "Asks" for Volunteers and Money

Asking for volunteers and donations is never easy. However offering people an opportunity for further involvement and providing financial support significantly increases your chances of success.

A very successful sample "ask" is below:

4 things you can do -

- Volunteer or join OCA's BioDemocracy Alliance Action Network.**

"If you want to stay up-to-date and get active on genetically engineered food and agriculture, the OCA's BioDemocracy Alliance can provide you with all the necessary tools to do so." (Sign up sheets are provided)

- Host a house party like this one.**

"If you liked this film and house party, host one yourself, with OCA's help." (Sign up sheets are available in the action packet)

- Make a tax-deductible donation to the OCA.**

"The OCA needs your help to spread the word and organize GE bans across the country. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to the OCA."

- Send "The Future of Food" and background materials to your state and federal representatives.**

"As you can tell, our elected officials need to see this film to make educated decisions. Here is information on how you can send them a copy of this film." (also in your action packet)

Facilitating involvement and donations also greatly increases the likelihood that people will participate.

Be sure to have copies of OCA materials from your action pack (for donating, volunteering, and hosting house parties) easily accessible to your party goers.

House Party Feedback Form

Please fill out this form after your house party and send it to:

Ryan Zinn · Organic Consumers Association · 1157 Kansas Street · San Francisco, CA 94107 · Fax: 218-353-7652

YOUR FEEDBACK IS CRITICAL IN HELPING US IMPROVE OUR FUTURE HOUSE PARTIES!

Host(s)		Date of party	
Address			
FACTS & FIGURES	FEEDBACK	YES	NO
# of guests	Did you receive enough guidance in organizing your house party?		
total donations	Please explain how it could have been better:		
# of new volunteers enrolled			
# of volunteers who helped you	Did you find the campaign materials helpful in conducting your house party?		
# of endorsements received	What other material would have been helpful?		
# of new house party hosts recruited			
What worked well? Do you have any suggestions or advice for future house party hosts?			
Do you have any stories or quotations to share with us?			
	Are you willing to do another House Party for the OCA?		
	Would you be willing to help someone else organize their party?		
Other comments:			
<p><i>Thank you for hosting the party! · Please send completed form to:</i></p> <p>Ryan Zinn · Organic Consumers Association · 1157 Kansas Street · San Francisco, CA 94107 · Fax: 218-353-7652</p>			