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USC Canada Food Film Night Guide

Hoping to show a food film in your home or community? This document provides some useful tips to help you plan a successful screening.

Film screenings on food topics can raise awareness, bring together like-minded people, and raise funds. They can also change the way participants eat, vote, farm and think. The information, stories and emotions in the films can empower them to become part of healthier, more just, environmentally-friendly food systems.

Are you thinking of having a smaller-scale event, such as in your own home or school? Read the section on this page.

If you're hoping to have a medium or larger-scale event that's open to the public, there's a guide customized to your needs on the other side of this page.

Foodie Film Night

Holding a small scale movie night -- at home, or at a school, church or community centre -- is a great way to get people interested in your cause. You can even try having a foodie film club every month!

1. *Choose a film.* Scroll through a list of USC's favourite films at www.usc-canada.org/films, or contact us for more advice.
2. *Get the film.* Rent the film from the local video store or, if that's not possible, you may be able to get the film from the producer or borrow it from USC. Email us at kgreen@usc-canada.org for more information.
3. *Set a date.* You can try using <http://www.meetingwizard.com/> to see which date works best for most of your friends.
4. *Plan the evening.* A good format for a film evening could include charging a suggested \$15 ticket to the night, which can help pay for the film rental and provide a donation to USC Canada. You can start the evening with a pot-luck dinner, then go on to the film screening, and follow the film with some discussion. You may want to put a theme for the dinner – for example, a birthday, the day of independence of a particular country, or world food day.



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5. *Send out an invitation.* You can send an email, call, or mail an invitation. Be clear on the time and location, and what the format for the evening will be.
6. *Set up.* The week before the event, start doing some background research on the film, to make sure you have some discussion questions and facts to get talk going after the film. For help with this, contact kgreen@usc-canada.org. The day before the showing, make sure the DVD will play on your system. Then, the night of, set up a room so that everyone will be comfortable for watching the film – good sized TV or wall to project on, enough comfortable chairs.
7. *Follow-up.* Call or email the friends who participated in the film night, asking them how they liked it, thanking them for coming, and asking for suggestions for next time. Keep a record of how much money you raised, after the cost of renting the film. Proceeds can be sent in to USC Canada, 56 Sparks St., Ottawa ON K1P 5B1. Be sure to include a note saying the funds are from a film night!

Out at the Movies

Whether you're part of a community garden, a church social justice committee, a farm group or a school club, a food film night can be an exciting way to take your learning a step further. By connecting what you do at a local level to the global struggle to take back control over our food system, participants feel empowered. And by organizing an event as part of a group or coalition, you'll reach out to new networks and have a good time!

Key Points:

1. *Create an organizing group.* You may already have an organization or club – but you may want to connect to other groups interested in food justice issues. As a coalition, you can reach new audiences and learn from one another. For example, a school club could team up with a community garden and a health food store. Spread the workload: one group/person can be in charge of publicity, one person in charge of choosing the films, and one in charge of logistics like the location, even though all of you will help with all tasks.
2. *Plan the basics of the event.* Is this a one-off screening, or a longer series of films, like Ottawa's Reel Food Film Festival? Around what date should the event be? How many



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people do you want to get out? What kind of film? Brainstorm a few good venues for the event in your community

3. *Book the venue.* Reserve the room where you'll have the screening, as early as possible (ie. at least one and a half months before the event). Book it for a weekday if possible – Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights are best for good turnout. Take into account accessibility by car, walking, public transport, and for the disabled. Possibilities include University auditoriums, The location will need to have AV setup to show the film: if possible, it's best to have an audio-visual person there to set up the night of the event. It's also useful to have a space outside the screening room, where you can set up display tables
4. *Choose your films.* Scroll through a list of USC's favourite films at www.usc-canada.org/films, or contact us for more advice. Create a shortlist of possible films.
5. *Get the films.* Rent the films from the local video store or, if that's not possible, you may be able to get the film from the producer or borrow it from USC. Email us at kgreen@usc-canada.org for more information. Once you have a few possible films, have a screening meeting with the organizers, where you watch all of them, and decide which one or two to show. You may want one feature-length film, or two or three shorts.
6. *Finances.* To support independent, documentary filmmakers, it is essential to pay the screening fee. Usually, they will give you a break when you say that you are just going to pass the hat. In some cities there are art-house theatres that do benefit screenings. These can be very large in numbers of people, but also very lucrative and high impact. Contact your local art-house theatre and go for it.
7. *Publicity.* Design yourself, or hire a designer, to create an eye catching poster, small handbill, and email. Create a blurb about the event as an organizing committee. The poster can be quite basic, or beautiful: just be sure you mention the name of the film, the date and location, and where to go for more information. Put posters up on poles and in shops around town. Handbills (printed four to a page) are very handy for quick promotion. Leave a few in coffee shops, hand them to people at other events. Since they are smaller, they will have less info- just the What, Where and When, plus a graphic to catch the eye.
8. *Promote, Promote, Promote.* Try to fill the house.



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9. *Set up.* The day before the event, take the film to the venue and make sure it works. The day of the event, get there early to set up information tables about your organizations outside the screening room. Email USC at kgreen@usc-canada.org for display materials on buying local food, free seed packets for handing out, and the ever-popular Seed Maps (www.seedmap.org). It's useful to put arrows on paper directing people around the building to make sure no one gets lost. You may want to set up a microphone at the front of the screening room, welcoming people and introducing the event and the film. Collect donations or ticket fees at the door in a basket.
10. *Follow-up.* Make sure that fees for room rental and film use get paid. With the proceeds that are leftover, consider supporting small-scale ecological farming in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Canada by donating to USC Canada. You can also keep some funds for your next screening event!