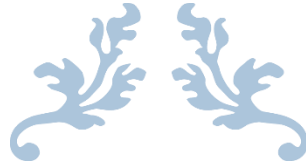




SEMA
FOUNDATION



PEACE ISLANDS

PLANTING DIALOGUE, HARVESTING PEACE



MARCH 2, 2017
SEMA FOUNDATION
2330 W. University Dr. #5 Tempe, AZ 85281



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WELCOME!

Why Peace Islands?

Food is the common experience that brings us together and with this simple idea in mind, the Sema Foundation is delighted to introduce a new program: The Peace Islands. This program aims to provide space for people of differing religious and cultural traditions to get-to-know one another in the cozy intimacy of each other's homes. Peace Island gatherings seek to build community through interreligious and intercultural sharing between members of different faiths and communities in Arizona.

In her book [Eating Together](#), Alice Julier argues that dining together can radically shift people's perspectives: It reduces people's perceptions of inequality, and diners tend to view those of different races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds as more equal than they would in other social scenarios.

In addition to that, we believe we can showcase our next generation a glimpse of how to build a stronger community despite our differences and understandings. If they can experience such a unique and friendly dialogue environment, they will have no difficulty to be a part of diverse community.

We are aware that the faith life of a person is delicate so tread with care. As someone who will explore boundaries of faith and culture, you are not required to "give-up" or "lose" your own identity, nor must you to take-on the spiritual attributes and beliefs of another. We often make incorrect assumptions and judge someone's world through the fog of own biases. With that in mind, you will be challenged in attempting to see the world through others' eyes. Truly mutual dialogue requires a person to enter someone else's world with soft-ness, humility and respect.

One's horizons are extended, in the end, both guests and hosts will be invited into a relationship of mutual respect. Your participation spearheads the grassroots effort to rid our communities of intolerance and fear. Your efforts to foster understanding and respect will erase the fear and build a stronger local community.

The Joy of Food from National Geographic Magazine

Food is more than survival. With it we make friends, court lovers, and count our blessings. The sharing of food has always been part of the human story. From Qesem Cave near Tel Aviv comes evidence of ancient meals prepared at a 300,000-year-old hearth, the oldest ever found, where diners gathered to eat together. Retrieved from the ashes of Vesuvius: a circular loaf of bread with scoring marks, baked to be divided. "To break bread together," a phrase as old as the Bible, captures the power of a meal to forge relationships, bury anger, and provoke laughter. Children make mud pies, have tea parties, trade snacks to make friends, and mimic the rituals of adults. They celebrate with sweets from the time of their first birthday, and the association of food with love will continue throughout life—and in some belief systems, into the afterlife. Consider the cultures that leave delicacies graveside to let the departed know they are not forgotten.



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Guiding Principles

1. Create a space of equality: all members are respected regardless of faith conviction.
2. Create a space for inclusivity: Encourage all voices to share and participate, but respect people's space and respect a person's decision to choose not to participate.
3. This gathering is NOT a space for conversion.
4. No group, tradition, or person holds the truth.
5. Avoid generalizations. Do not substitute labels for complicated realities, avoid arguments, and do not cut-down any group.
6. Respect differences within one's own tradition and the tradition of the "other".
7. Trust your personal experiences but speak only for yourself and not for others in your tradition or the tradition of others.
8. Let-go of the need for an outcome. Don't try to come up with an answer or a solution.
9. Listen, listen, and when there's nothing left to do, listen. Be curious, it's natural, ask respectfully.



What Can I Expect?

Expectations as Hosts

- Welcome guests with openness and respect.
- Make sure to address all of the dietary needs of your guests (Halal, vegan, diabetes etc.).
- Announce a schedule for the evening allowing those guests that have to leave early to make respectful departure.
- If you or your tradition has a ritual component to the meal use it as an opportunity for educating.
- Prepare conversation starters ahead of time.
- Expect yourself to be asked questions. But don't feel as though you have to be an expert!

Expectations as Guests

- Bring an open mind (and of course it wouldn't hurt to bring a gift)
- Communicate your dietary restrictions/preferences
- Communicate to the host if you will be bringing others (spouses, children, etc.) only after you ask permission from the host.
- Treat the homes of the host as a "sacred space".



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Example Agenda (only if you need it!)

1. Welcome (the host)
2. Introductions (nametags are helpful)
3. Explain the Purpose of Dinner (the host)
4. Serve Food or Treats
5. Blessing/Opening Words: (the host or guest)
6. Review Principles: Discuss the supplied principles or generate your own. Perhaps you'd like to create a covenant statement unique to your group context?
7. Enjoy The Conversation of knowing someone as well as introducing your own world.
8. Plan for the Future: When will the next meeting be? Who will be hosting? A theme?
9. Closing Words or Prayer

For your first meal you may find that introductions could fill the entire evening. That's great! Don't feel as though you need to rigidly adhere to this supplied "road map".