

# Hosting a Dinner Basket Conversation on Substance Use



**A Guide by  
Selkirk College**

## The Dinner Basket Project: Conversations on Substance Use

Welcome! We are delighted that you are interested in hosting a dinner party. The Dinner Basket Project: Conversations on Substance Use began in 2013 as a Selkirk College Healthy Campuses initiative in conjunction with the Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses (HM|HC) Changing the Culture of Substance Use (CCSU) project.

CCSU aims to promote—in various appropriate ways—more constructive shared views on and healthier practices around substance use in campus settings. The project continues to foster the development of a diverse community of students, staff, administrators, government personnel and community partners from all over British Columbia that has been exploring the concept of vibrant campus cultures and particularly looking at what helps people have healthy relationships with substances.

Based on provincial summits, webinars, and conversations, we are guessing that:

- People may be more skilled in managing their personal health when they have experiences of social and community connection.
- Cooking and eating food brings people together.
- Substance use patterns might be different when combined with leisurely meals and dialogue and these kinds of sit-down social meals are decreasing in our busy society.
- Meaningful conversations raise awareness around personal patterns, values and life-style choices and deepen healthy cultures.

But, we are curious to learn more. Dinner conversations on substance use are all about learning what students have to say. We need your feedback and insights!

So—here are suggested ingredients to a great dinner party...

## Recipe for a Dinner Basket Conversation



**Invitation:** Choose a date and time and invite a group of 6—8 students and/or staff to cook and eat together (view sample recipes in *Appendix A*). Consider inviting a couple of people you don't know that well to add some diversity of personalities and stories. We suggest that you take the time to personally invite your guests. There is something special about a personal invite.

- Pick up your basket of ingredients from your counsellor or contact your CCSU contact person and assemble your basket (this may be a big part, so consider doing it with a friend).
- If everyone in your group is legally able to drink you may or may not choose to have drinks with your evening meal.
- Hosting involves noticing people's needs and helping everyone to feel welcomed, included and respected. Appreciate everyone for coming.

**Setting:** Consider making the table lovely to help set the tone for a special event where people feel cared for and there is time to savor the flavours and stories.

**Collaboration:** Cook your meal together. If you choose... take a few pictures (or ask someone else to) of your group cooking, eating and cleaning up together.

**Confidentiality:** "What is spoken here stays here." Let the group know that you may take some notes to capture some of the wisdom and ideas, but that you will not be using names. Check whether pictures are okay and let them know that some pictures and comments may be posted on the Dinner Blog.

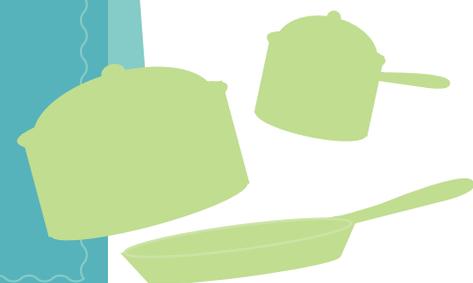
**Sharing:** As you eat, facilitate the discussion using the conversation guide on page 4.

**Meaningful Conversation:** Encourage and model a spirit of deep listening, sharing and curiosity about each other's perspectives and experiences.

**Social Connection:** Connectedness and caring for the whole group creates a structure of belonging.

**Follow-up Care:** After the dinner ask each guest to fill out a Reflection Sheet on page 4. We will be using these comments and reflections to help us deepen our understanding of healthy relationships with substance use and ways to continue building a vibrant and inclusive campus culture.

- Provide counselling contacts (See page 6). Comment that if anyone feels triggered by the conversation; encourage them to connect with a college counsellor or other community resources.
- Appreciate everyone again.
- Stay around at the end when people are leaving, in case anyone needs to check in with you individually.
- As a great host, make sure everyone has plans to get home safely.



## Student Reflections on the Dinner Basket Conversations

- “I was so pleasantly surprised by how much students want to talk about this. It’s on our minds! We want to talk about it and we want to have a healthy relationship with substances, but may not know how to open dialogue.”
- “Getting together over a meal is a great way to get into a long, deep conversation on subjects like substance use. Eating good food and talking with good friends can produce healthy relationships.”
- “Food is easy to neglect when school and life gets stressful, but community and friendship give the opportunity to work on healthier habits.”
- “I think it’s just interesting to exchange perspectives with people outside our circles.”
- “I think it sparks good conversation, people will share more if you give them free food.”
- “Food brings people together.”
- “Conversation is always easier over a good meal.”
- “Good food + good conversation means a healthy culture.”
- “It’s good to know that people from all different walks of life can have an open, non-judgmental discussion about a sensitive topic.”
- “It’s a healthy way of de-stigmatizing the topic with peers rather than authority figures.”

“I think conversation is the first step to making change in choices. Starting this dialogue certainly works and provokes thoughts regarding a healthy relationship with substances. And, it is a great way to connect and de-stress with other students.”

Check out the Campus Conversations about Healthy Living Blog for conversation about food, health, finding balance and thriving at college at [tenthstreetdinner.wordpress.com](https://tenthstreetdinner.wordpress.com)

To write your own blog post or get more involved with this project, email Robin Higgins at [RHiggins@selkirk.ca](mailto:RHiggins@selkirk.ca).



To learn more about Selkirk College’s Dinner Basket Conversations, watch their video at <https://healthycampuses.ca/resource/dinner-basket-conversations-selkirk-college>

## A Suggested Guide to a Conversation on Substance Use

...But, feel free to ask questions meaningful to your group!

- 1 Do you think it's possible to have a healthy relationship with substances?
- 2 What are some of your earliest memories of substance use and how has that shaped your present relationship with substances?
- 3 What other experiences or mentors have helped you have a healthy relationship with substances?
- 4 If you use substances, how do you know when you have had “enough” and how do you know when to stop?
- 5 What is substance use like in your current community? What is working and not working for your friends and colleagues?
- 6 What is the difference between enjoying or needing substances?
- 7 What do you do to keep yourself and each other safe?
- 8 If you drink—what is a good night of drinking? What is a bad night of drinking?
- 9 If there was one thing that could be done on campus that would help students have a healthier relationship with substances, what would that be?

## Reflection Sheet

1. What was your experience of this dinner party?

2. Why do you think it is possible (or not) to have a healthy relationship with substances? If they can, what helps people have healthy relationships with substances?

3. What is one thing that you learned or reflected on during the discussion on substance use?

4. In your opinion, what is the connection between food, conversation and healthy cultures?

5. Any other reflections or suggestions?

## Local Resources & Services

Be sure to find out about services in your area before hosting a dinner. Here is an example of local resources and services for students at Selkirk College.

If you would like counselling or are feeling distress, please contact:

### Selkirk Counselling Services

- 250-365-1273

Or, if it is after hours phone the **Crisis Line**

- 1-888-353-2273

### Interior Health Community Substance Use Service Numbers

Open Monday to Friday 8:30am–4:30pm

- Castlegar 250-304-1846
- Nelson 250-505-7248
- Trail 250-364-6262

### Interior Health Substance Use Resource Page

- Find **Substance Use Resources** under the Your Care section at [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)
- There you can also view the **Interior Health Community Substance Use Service Locations**

### West Kootenay Sexual Health Clinics

Castlegar, Kaslo, Nakusp, Nelson, Trail

- 1-800-SEX-SENS (739-7367)

### Mental Health & Substance Use Services in the Area

- Use the Find Us tool at [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca) to search for **Mental Health and Substance Use Services** in your area
- Read the **You and Substance Use** workbook at [heretohelp.bc.ca](http://heretohelp.bc.ca)

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**Canadian Mental  
Health Association**  
British Columbia  
*Mental health for all*



**University  
of Victoria**

**Centre for Addictions  
Research of BC**

## Recipes to Get you Cooking



### Zesty Lentil & Dill Soup (Lentils are super cheap and nutritious!)

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 2 cups red lentils       | 1/4 tsp red chili pepper flakes (optional) |
| 1 large onion, diced     | 1 tbsp oregano + 2 bay leaves              |
| 2 tsp salt (optional)    | 1 bunch of fresh dill                      |
| 6 cloves garlic          | 8 cups vegetable or chicken stock or water |
| 3 carrots, diced small   | juice of 2 lemons (or lemon juice)         |
| 1 red pepper diced small | 2 tsp lemon zest (if using fresh lemons)   |
| 1 tsp black pepper       |  |

#### Method:

- Rinse lentils and set aside
- Heat oil, add onions until translucent, add carrots, garlic, red pepper, salt, black pepper, red chili flakes, oregano and bay leaves. Stir well until carrots are tender.
- Add stock or water and the lentils, bring to boil.
- Reduce heat and simmer for approx. 25 minutes or until lentils are soft.
- Remove the bay leaf. Add the lemon juice, zest, bunch of dill and salt.
- Serve with warm bread or pita wedges.
- Enjoy!

### Yummy Chipotle & Lime Black Bean Burritos (Crock pot cooking is awesome!)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 4 cups dried black turtle bean                           | 2 avocados + 2 cloves of garlic + lime juice for guacamole    |
| 1-3 chipotle peppers (canned peppers are good and saucy) | 2 tomatos, 1/2 red onion, 1 bunch of cilantro for fresh salsa |
| 1-2 limes (or lime juice)                                | 1 cup of sour cream or plain yogurt for additional topping    |
| 6-8 wraps of your choice (corn is worth trying)          |   |
| 1 red onion  |   |
| 2 colorful peppers                                       |   |

#### Method:

- Rinse black beans the day before then cook for about a day in your crock pot.
- Add Chipotle peppers and lime to taste!
- In a frying pan, sauté onions chopped onions and peppers.
- Mash up avocado, garlic and lime for guacamole.
- Chop tomatoes, onions and cilantro and combine for fresh salsa.
- Assemble your burritos.
- Enjoy!

