

EXCHANGE OF PRACTICES

FOOD AND CULINARY DELIGHTS

On 19 November 2024, the exchange of practices baptised 'Dinner's ready!' involved 20 participants from seven European countries who met to discuss the issues of food in their groups. This mainly involved communities but also volunteer groups where meals are eaten together.

The discussions highlighted that tensions that can arise around mealtimes. The challenge is to listen and create a friendly atmosphere while adopting a more environmentally-friendly approach to meals. One of the recurring issues is the obsession with eating a lot of meat among some companions who burn off a lot of energy doing their jobs. However, as this can become a health problem over time, communities have managed to initiate joint work to reduce the amount of meat eaten by improving quality and discovering the pleasure of vegetarian meals.

Lastly, we addressed the matter of food banks, as some donations to Emmaus can prove to be a poisoned chalice when they are overly processed or perishable products in excessive quantities. Just because we are poor, doesn't mean we should just accept anything. We have the right to choose and our partners must also understand this!

The Tero Loko Emmaus group, engaged in organic farming, places great importance on the quality of meals prepared!



The following emerged from our discussions on how to improve mealtimes in the Emmaus groups

- **Invite people who eat together** to regular discussions about food-related matters and make joint decisions, as this has an impact on the health and cohesion of the group;
- **Earmark a decent budget**, taking into consideration aspects of health/well-being associated with this budget item;
- **Train cooks** to make healthy and tasty food;
- **Take these four areas into account:**
 - Good products (organic, local, healthy);
 - Well prepared/careful cooking/cooking skills (taste, right amount, colourful, attractive, filling, homemade);
 - Variety/balance: between vegetable/animal protein, likewise for texture, it's very important to have diversity (raw, cooked, soft, crunchy);
 - Meaning attributed to food/mealtime conditions: friendly atmosphere, sharing cultures, joy.
- **Make sure that kitchen and serving duties are not assigned based on gender**, strike a balance in sharing tasks;
- **Reduce our waste** in this area as well, by limiting packaging and starting a compost heap if you have a garden.