

## **How to Organize a Fundraising School Cookbook Quickly and Easily**

### **By Susan Love**

If you are fundraising for a school, you can use sales of candy, magazines, plants and other very products, which work well. I know because I used to teach in a school where we did all these things.

From my point of view as both a teacher and a parent, once the campaign was finished, the children may not have had a sense of accomplishment.

I wanted to create something special that they would feel proud of and that, at the end of the day, perhaps even the end of the school year, they would look at and remember what they had done. On the other hand, if they helped make a school cookbook by bringing in family recipes and making drawings and artwork, they would be sharing their culture and talent in making a community project.

Let me tell you about some of the things that schools have done.

One nursery school made a very cute cookbook with a recipe and drawing and story from each child, such as: "This is my mommy and my daddy and my little brother, John. He cries all the time but mommy says we have to keep him anyway." They sold out all of their cookbooks in 72 hours.

Another school made a cookbook with color pictures of all the children in chef hats and sold it at the school auction.

A high school class made a multi-cultural cookbook for their business course, wrote the business and marketing plan, and presented it in front of the whole school. They got a grade of A+.

### **General Thoughts on Organizing a Group**

I have outlined some of the ways that you could put a school cookbook together that would allow everyone to participate.

Controlling the input is best done by setting up a few rules or guidelines, which you establish at the beginning as you announce the project.

How put your cookbook together depends on how much control you feel you need as you work on it. Some groups have asked one person or a small group to do the inputting, while others have asked the whole community. Here are a couple of ways you might organize the project.

### **Announcing the Project**

Tell people what you are going to do, what the timeframe is, and how they can help you. Make sure the children feel involved and that the cookbook project is something they are

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helping to make. They will be proud of it and eager to have their family and friends buy some. It's a general fundraising truth that the more people are involved in a project, the more cookbooks you will sell.

### **Entering the Recipes**

Here are a few options for compiling and entering the recipes into your cookbook database.

#### *Option #1*

You can form a small team of six people. Two would be in charge of collecting the recipes, stories, and photos, and three would be in charge of entering the material. The last person can proof the book once it is ready.

#### *Option #2*

You invite families to help you make the cookbook by filling in the different categories in the cookbook on a first come, first served basis. Don't forget to ask contributors to "please don't add a second recipe for the same thing" (to avoid multiple entries of a particular recipe).

#### *Option #3*

You ask every family for three to five recipes, telling them that you will use two of the recipes but would like to have a choice so that you can make sure you have recipes from each category of food. Choose the recipes you would like each family to submit and then sign the families up as contributors so they can help by submitting their recipes.

Well, what happens when you have asked for recipes, but not enough have come in? This happens when people feel overwhelmed and don't feel able to choose which recipe to give you. I have found that if you ask people for specific categories – starting with an easy category – they feel that you are asking them for something easier, and they respond more quickly.

Once you start to get recipes, you can send out a note telling the community what you have and then asking for a particular recipe or category that is missing. I think you will see that this works because they feel that the project is well under way and they don't want to miss out.

### **How Many Pages Should the Cookbook Be?**

An ideal size for the cookbook is about 150 to 180 pages. Remember that the book has one recipe per page so that it looks professional and not crowded. The number of recipes and artwork or photos will depend on the size of your community.

If it starts to get too large, you can always make another one the next year; just remember to put a date on the cookbook, as you may find that they are such fun that you will want to do one every year.

### **Watching the Cookbook Take Shape**

So that everyone has the fun of watching the book being built, you can establish a general username and password, if you're using a cookbook Web site for the process, that parents and children can use to see the day-to-day progress. You do this by adding yourself as another contributor (change the automatically generated username and password to something easy to remember) and then give out this username and password to the school community so that they can log on.

People would be asked not to add material to the book when logging on with this username and password as it will be removed at the end just before printing. You can remove any unwanted material easily by removing a contributor's name from the contributor's list. When you do this, all the input from that contributor disappears from the book.

When working with a large group of people, photos, children's drawings, etc. are best collected, scanned, and submitted by the editing team so that the quality is the same for all the images.

The amount of control that you would need over the process would depend on your particular community – how large it is and how well they respond to a group project.

### **Final Proofing**

I strongly suggest you print your cookbook file to check for typos and spacing errors, which are often difficult to see on a computer screen.

Just before you are ready to proof the cookbook, you send out an e-mail to everyone involved telling them that the cut-off date is such and such. When the day arrives, you change all the contributor's passwords so that no one but the editor-in-chief can make any changes.

### **Pricing**

Most fundraisers add about 100% to the cost price of the cookbook, except if it is a very thick one, in which case they add about 60%. This is a good reason not to publish a big book of 350 pages, but keep it to between 150 to 180 pages.

### **Taking Orders**

A very good way to judge how many books you will be able to sell is to first order a small quantity – say, 5 or 10 so that the team can show them and take orders. When you are ready, you place your order. If you need still more books at a later date you can usually reorder any time.

*Susan Love was a professional fundraiser for 16 years before founding HeritageCookbook.com.*