



MENSA® FOUNDATION

Educational Programs

Teacher Appreciation Dinner

Overview

This series of educational programs was designed to simultaneously entertain and challenge gifted youth in their time outside of the school setting; however, the activities may be easily shared and enjoyed by older people as well. Programs may be scaled up or down depending on number of attendees, desired level of complexity, etc. Sample materials are included with most plans.

The Educational Programs series was developed by Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T., the Mensa Foundation's Gifted Youth Specialist.

Introduction

A "We're lucky to have you!" teacher appreciation dinner does not need to just be for kids. Many Mensans are, as adults, learning a skill or hobby with a teacher of some kind, whether of a musical instrument, handcraft, dance, martial arts or a language. Feel free to include teachers and mentors of all kinds, or teachers from years gone by.

A teacher appreciation dinner can be a simple picnic-style dinner or a very elaborate, formal affair. This activity takes a middle ground, so feel free to adapt it to your Local Group's needs and norms.

Supplies (see Preparation section for details)

- Invitations.
- Materials to make clipboard gifts for attendees (optional).
- Groceries to make dinner.
- Decoration materials such as construction paper and balloons.
- Plastic tableware.
- Celtic music CD.

Samples

Attached as a separate Word file, you will find the following sample materials that you are welcome to use or reproduce:

- "We're lucky to have you!" dinner invitation



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Preparation

Select an appropriate location for this event, preferably with kitchen facilities.

One month in advance, send invitations. You can use the sample invitation as is or download a more Celtic-looking font from www.ireland-information.com/freecelticfonts.htm.

Two weeks before the event, have each attendee follow up with the teacher he or she invited if the teacher has not responded; this will leave time for each attendee to invite his or her second choice as needed.

Optional gift project

Either at a pre-activity get-together or on their own at home, have Young Mensans make a clipboard to give as a gift to their honored guests. To do this, have each youth use a piece of decorative paper to type or handwrite a thank-you letter to the chosen teacher. Affix the letter to the back of the clipboard using decoupage glue such as Mod Podge® (available at any crafts store).

Menu (recipes follow)

- Salad
- Chicken enchiladas
- Sweet cornbread
- Mint chocolate chip ice cream and cookies (any kind).

Decorations

- In keeping with the theme of “luck,” decorate with shamrocks and other symbols of luck. Excessive use of the color green is encouraged! Some specific ideas include:
 - Cut shamrocks out of green construction paper and strew them about on the tables. You can find a pattern here:
www.kidsdomain.com/craft/cegif/StPattParty_PDF.pdf
 - Use bouquets of green and white balloons for centerpieces.
 - Use green napkins and green plastic cups.
 - Place a green apple on each teacher’s plate.
- Cut horseshoes out and hang them above the doorways (open end up, of course!). Find a pattern here: www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/ys/crafts/HORSEPAT.HTM

Acquire or borrow a Celtic music CD for background music.

Recruit an enthusiastic MC.



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Recipes

Salad

Add various salad “fixings” such as tomato, celery and carrots to bagged Romaine lettuce. For additional flavor, color and health benefits, add dried cranberries. Have Italian and Ranch dressings available.

Chicken enchiladas

These can be made ahead and frozen. To freeze, cool completely and wrap the entire pan very tightly in foil. When ready to use, thaw in refrigerator and heat with foil on. Each recipe will make a 9x13 pan of enchiladas.

Ingredients:

- 12 to 14 corn tortillas
- 4 oz. cream cheese (may use low-fat)
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 cups jarred salsa verde, divided
- 2 cups shredded rotisserie chicken (or bake it yourself to save money)
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese

To prepare:

- Preheat oven to 350°.
- Heat half of the tortillas in the microwave between damp paper towels for 30 seconds to a minute. Repeat with the other half of the tortillas and set them aside.
- Using an electric mixer, beat the cream cheese and sour cream together until smooth.
- Stir in 1 cup of salsa and all the chicken.
- Spread ½ cup salsa on the bottom of a 9x13 baking dish.
- Spoon chicken mixture into center of each tortilla. Sprinkle 1-2 tbsp. of cheddar cheese over the chicken mixture. Fold both sides of the tortilla over the filling and place the enchilada (with the seam side down) in the pan on top of the salsa you spread on the bottom.
- Repeat with all the tortillas.
- Spoon remaining salsa over the enchiladas. Sprinkle the Monterey Jack cheese over the enchiladas.
- Bake for 30 minutes.

Teacher Appreciation Dinner—Preparation 2



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Cornbread

This recipe makes a tender, slightly sweet cornbread. Each recipe makes a 9x13 pan.

Ingredients:

- 4 cups baking mix (such as Bisquick®)
- 12 tbsp. cornmeal
- 3 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup honey
- 2 cups non-fat plain yogurt
- ½ cup skim milk

To Prepare:

- Preheat oven to 350°.
- Spray a 9x13 baking dish with cooking spray.
- In a large bowl, stir together the baking mix, cornmeal, baking powder and baking soda.
- In a small bowl, whisk together the eggs, honey, yogurt and skim milk. Pour into the dry ingredients.
- Mix gently until there are no lumps of flour showing, but do not overmix.
- Pour into prepared pan. Bake 28-34 minutes, until golden brown.



Teacher Appreciation Dinner—Preparation 3



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Showtime!

Before Event

Assign people to the different tasks required: invitations, food, decorations, setup, cleanup, master of ceremonies, etc.

If you choose to do the clipboard gift project, it should be done at least 10 days before the event.

Day of Event

Set up the room, using decorations as desired. Set a specific place for each teacher. To do this easily, just write the name in green pen on a plain index card. Fold the index card in half and stand it up on the plate. Store clipboards (if done) on a table.

Have Mensans arrive before guests. As guests arrive, have each student accompany his/her teacher to the table.

Once all have arrived, the MC should give a welcome that includes the idea of how lucky everyone feels to have such wonderful teachers in their lives and thanks people for coming.

Have the students serve dinner to their teachers. You can do this by having a buffet table set up with the food and having the students bring both their plates and their teachers' plates to the table to fill. You can also have the food in the kitchen area.

After everyone is nearly done, have the students clear their teachers' plates. After everyone has finished dinner, have the MC announce that each student will introduce his/her teacher. Have each student and teacher pair stand, and have the student give the teacher's name, subject/year/activity taught, and why the student chose to honor that particular teacher. If you have a large group, make sure to tell students to limit their introductions; you can say a lot in 15 seconds! If a student's teacher is not present, that student can still talk about his or her favorite teacher.

After the introductions are completed, have students present the clipboards to their teachers.

Bring the ice cream and cookies out to a table. Again, have the students serve their teachers. After dessert, have the MC close the activity.

Encourage students to nominate their favorite teachers for the Mensa Foundation's Distinguished Teacher Award; see www.mensafoundation.org/programs for more details.

Teacher Appreciation Dinner—Showtime!