

# Women's & Children's Free Kitchen

## WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S FREE RESTAURANT

1620 N. Monroe St.  
Spokane, Washington 99205  
509-324-1995  
[www.wcfrspokane.org](http://www.wcfrspokane.org)



### WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S FREE KITCHEN SERVED

its first meal 20 years ago. The Restaurant began as volunteer intended to empower low income women by providing free meals and an opportunity to network in a safe environment. After securing a non-profit sponsor and a location in one of Washington's poorest neighborhoods, twice weekly free meals followed by periodic meetings or self-help projects began.

The Restaurant was run entirely by volunteers until 2001. A steady growth in diners called for the hiring of a director/chef. Local caterer, Marlene Alford was hired and focused on gourmet meals and three part-time assistants have been added. Volunteers still provide the bulk of the labor, donating in excess of 8,500 hours each year.

How did the Restaurant find the

supplies for the 30,455 meals prepared in 2007? The Restaurant is still a very much grassroots operation and depends on the generosity of the community. In-kind and cash donations from local businesses, individuals and churches, fundraisers and small grants all contribute to it's success..

Over time, the after dinner projects were eliminated, but the twice weekly dinners continued in the original location in the basement of St. Paul's United Methodist Church. (The Restaurant and church are not affiliated). Women of all ages and children age 0-18 are invited to dine at the restaurant. Dinners are served in a pleasant sit down restaurant type atmosphere that includes table cloths, centerpieces, and hand painted murals. Volunteer servers provide the hospitality. Seconds are generally available, but

doggy bags are not. Menus vary considerably and depend on donations, but are always tasty and well balanced. I've had hamburgers, breakfast dinner (144 eggs worth), and a baked ham holiday dinner amongst others. Many visit with old or new found friends while dining, enjoying both the warm food, and warm hearts as envisioned by founders.

In 2004, Restaurant cooked, frozen take-out meals became available on Friday afternoons. A hot lunch and groceries including produce, dairy, and other donated items are now included on Fridays also. The meal is free, but a picture ID, proof of family size, and demonstration of need is required for take out items. The lines can sometimes be long, stretching into the parking lot. Diners are seated in groups of eight, but the line moves at a steady pace. Lunch is less formal and meals are picked up at the counter with diners asked to clear their place at the table. Hearty home made soups are often the main fare. For safety reasons and to keep fire exits clear, tables are called one at a time to pick up groceries, everyone must wait their turn. Once checked in, a volunteer will help you "shop" for available groceries. There is no need to rush your meal, just enjoy it as you join in chatter while you wait. As a lady in front of me once said, "It is well worth the wait."