

Step-by-Step Guide to Plan a Farm-to-Table Dinner in Crook County

1. **Set yourself up for success!** Start planning 4-6 months ahead to guarantee a venue space, caterer, and intentional collaboration with partners that doesn't feel rushed.
 - a. **Aim for monthly meetings** and be sure to [keep detailed notes](#)! This will help hold everyone accountable, stay on track, and replicate the event in the future.
2. **Determine which businesses/organizations will be key partners** in designing your farm-to-table dinner. Potential connections to consider:
 - a. **People who have helped facilitate farm-to-table dinners** in the past ([CROP Farmers Market](#))
 - b. **Ranchers/farmers involved in agritourism** development locally or in their own business ([Wine Down Ranch](#), [L&S Farm and Garden](#), [Smiley's Lavender](#))
 - c. **Local food systems organizations** ([High Desert Food and Farm Alliance](#).) for support in connecting consumers to producers
 - d. **Local tourism organization and/or chamber of commerce** to help provide local connections, as well as promote event to the community and regional visitors ([Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce](#), [Explore Prineville](#), [Visit Central Oregon](#))
3. **Identify basic event details, including event venue, ideal date/date range** (consider [which fresh products will be available](#) during that specific time of year), **and anticipated number of attendees to apply for relevant event permits**, as regulated by [Crook County code. 18.16.055 Agri-tourism and other commercial events](#).
 - a. Permitting is a tedious process, be sure to reach out to the [Crook County Planning Department](#) and set up a meeting to discuss your plans for this event. They will walk you through their permit recommendations, discuss the associated costs, and the timeline (**depending on the permit, it can take up to 3-6 months to be approved**)
4. **Create a project management plan with clear goals for the event, expectations for each stakeholder involved (for the sake of accountability), and timeline** for each group of the following tasks:
 - a. **Set a venue space.** This is a great thing to nail down first as dates in the summer can be competitive, and the space could impact the caterer's decision to work your farm-to-table dinner.
 - i. **Most farm-to-table dinners are hosted on farms or ranches**, but sometimes they may be in a more rustic building or restaurant venue.
 - ii. Farms or ranches that are currently also event venues will likely be the easiest to work with, as they commonly have more facilities, like [Wine Down Ranch](#).
 1. If it's a working ranch, rather than a ranch space converted into an event venue, you will have an easier time getting agritourism permits (and depending on the frequency of events, sponsor/grant funding).

- iii. If it's your own farm or ranch, still **set aside money to pay yourself for the venue in the budget** if you have the room. These events tend to have low profit margins, so if you budget for it, you will know how much sponsorship, fundraising, and ticket sales you will need to make it a more profitable and sustainable event.
- b. **Reach out to potential caterers.** Send out as many formal or informal RFPs (request for proposals - ask for a quote for their service with as much information as possible, either using an email template or a document with expectations and event details) as possible. From there, **select your top three and average their quotes to formulate your budget item.**
 - i. While most caterers can pull off an amazing farm-to-table dinner, it's helpful to work with a chef/caterer who has done a farm-to-table or locally-sourced dinner before. They are likely to have the knowledge, farm source connections, and necessary equipment, making them likely a cheaper option to pursue.
 - 1. Caterers in Prineville, interested in doing farm-to-table dinner
 - a. **Woody Stevens, Chef for [Landmark Catering](#)** (catered 2024 Wine Down Farm-to-Table Dinner, received a lot of praise for food): Contact - Celena Pentrack, cpentrack@hotmail.com, 360-451-4081
 - b. **Michael Rogers, Chef at Facebook:** Contact - mfrogers1969@yahoo.com, 541-206-9243
 - 2. Central Oregon Caterers with local sourcing experience
 - a. [AlpenGlow Adventure Catering](#), based in Bend
 - b. [Luckey's Woodsman](#), based in Bend
 - c. Ask HDFFA to connect you with other farm-to-table organizers, people are usually happy to share resources, like their go-to-caterer.
 - i. [Rainshadow Organics](#), based in Sisters, hosts several farm-to-table dinners throughout the year, but they have their own culinary team. They could be a great resource for questions though.
- c. **Determine the event rentals you will need.** Again, **send several RFPs out, then choose your top three for your budget item.**
 - i. Depending on the time of year, should you have a tent? Should the tent have a wall or two for additional shade?
 - ii. Do you want one long table (traditional family-style approach to farm-to-table) or multiple round tables to allow for easier communication?
 - iii. What type of linens do you want covering the tables, and do you want matching linen napkins? Caterer may offer to provide linens.
 - iv. Event rentals in Central Oregon
 - 1. [Event Elegance](#), based in Crook County: Contact - Jordan Guthrie, jordan@eventeleganceoregon.net, 541-981-4752

(provided tent, chairs, and tables at matched price for 2024 Wine Down Farm-to-Table Dinner)

2. **Crook County Parks & Recreation:** Contact - Andrea Weaver, andrea@ccprd.org, 541-447-1209 extension 3
3. **Incredible Events**, based in Bend: Contact - info@incredible-events.com, 541-317-0450
4. **Bend Party Rentals**, based in Bend
5. **Apex Event Rentals**, based in Redmond

d. Once you have estimates for the essentials of your event (venue, catering, rentals), **consider additional event costs and craft an estimated budget.**

- i. While some things can be included in the cost for the essentials you've already received quotes for (i.e. caterer provides drinks and linens, or event rental company also provides linens and decor), it could be more affordable to use an additional service or purchase them yourself.
 1. **What do you want for decorations?** Consider small details, like place setting items, centerpiece arrangements, lighting, etc.
 2. **What do you want for beverages?** Will you be making NA beverages or purchasing individual beverages? What about alcoholic beverages?
 - a. Alcoholic and NA beverages may be able to be donated, especially if you are partnering with a non-profit - more information on sponsorship to follow
 - b. Where will you get glassware for these beverages? Do you want cans or bottles, or would you go for a classier look with glass pints or wine glasses, or more rustic with mason jars?
 3. **What do you want for entertainment?** Consider if you want to have live music, or even just a sound system for background music.
 4. **What additional staffing needs do you have?** Are the caterers managing all food service? Who will be pouring alcoholic beverages? Will you want to donate to a volunteer organization for help with set up and clean up or will the event rental company help with that?

e. Now that you have your estimated costs and your goal number of attendees, consider how much income you need to break even or yield a profit (beyond just what you'd like for your event space).

- i. **Set a ticket price for your event that you feel comfortable with.**
 1. While \$100/ticket is expensive, that cost is pretty common in Central Oregon, and will likely offer your best chance at breaking even.
 2. A \$75 ticket does make it more affordable, however, it will require a lot more donations and sponsorships to break even.

- ii. **Considering that ticket cost in relation to your item costs in your budget, determine what the deficit is**, and decide how you want to fill that gap.
 - 1. Is it by requesting donations for things like beverages?
 - 2. Is it by reconsidering some ambitious hopes for decor or music?
 - 3. Is it by working with local organizations, or even friends, to borrow or rent things, like decor? For example, if you are a Member with your local Chamber of Commerce. **Embrace the mentality that it never hurts to ask.**
 - 4. Is it through requesting sponsorships from local businesses?
- f. **Build your sponsorship package and initiate asks** of businesses, i.e. wineries and breweries for locally-sourced alcoholic beverages, or local businesses
 - i. Determine what your ask is for the businesses and describe the marketing advantages a donating business will receive.
 - 1. Create a **document with what you're asking for**, maybe it's a specific monetary amount or to cover an element of the event (i.e. tent or catering sponsor (as in business covers the cost of renting a tent), beverage sponsor (as in beverage provider donates some of their product for the event)).
 - 2. Include a **list of the marketing materials you intend to curate**: i.e. social media posts, newsletter updates/email campaigns, event descriptions on various web pages and event calendar, press releases, day-of event materials (banners, flyers, etc.)
 - a. You can either write this out and have an email template that you plug in as you reach out to sponsors, or you can [create a flyer that you attach to your email asks](#).
 - ii. **Send out your asks to businesses based on who you think would be a good fit**, who is known for being charitable and supporting other events, and who your higher-rollers are that you can include a bigger ask of (i.e. Meta sponsoring catering).
 - 1. **Look at common community event sponsors**. For example, on the Facebook pages for other organizations, like the Crooked River Roundup and the Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce, you can find the logos and business names of regular community supporters and sponsors to potentially reach out to.
 - 2. **Begin with emails if you can** (so you can include more detail and maybe your document showing your sponsorship package offerings), but expect questions or no response, so be persistent and give them a call to follow-up if you don't hear back after a week.
 - 3. **Keep proper documentation** of committed businesses, update your budget (income), and determine if you need to continue finding more sponsors, or identify another way to cut costs or fundraise.

4. **Request a logo and brief business description in your ask** once a business or organization has agreed to sponsor something for your event.

5. **Maintain close contact** and be super accommodating—offer to pick up checks or products—and grateful for their time and collaboration.

g. Start marketing your event!

- i. **Determine how you will sell tickets, through which organization** (as they will also need marketing content), **and when you want ticket sales to go live** (to give yourself enough time to sell them out, if you have a set number for seating).

1. If you are a member at the local Chamber of Commerce, that could be a great place to have tickets sold in-person (as **there are many people that want a physical ticket and also don't like to make payments online**).

2. The **High Desert Food and Farm Alliance (HDFFA) is a great farm-to-table partner**, as they have a platform on their website where they can sell tickets, collect the money, and write you a check at the end for the ticket sales.

- a. **There will be a 2.5% credit card fee on their website** (so keep that in mind if you want the ticket cost to not exceed a certain amount), but that is the only additional charge. HDFFA will partner for free, but may have the option on the registration form for people to add a donation for their organization.

- b. **Selling tickets online is a great way to make tickets more accessible**, but ensure you have a print ticket that accompanies a receipt. Having a place to purchase tickets in person is also important,

3. Create a **ticket registration questionnaire/form** for your event
 - a. Remember to ask for their **full name, email address, any allergens or accessibility needs, additional questions or concerns**, as well as potentially a **check box asking if they'd like to receive future event updates**/subscribe to your newsletter.

- ii. **Design an event flyer and description with consistent messaging and imagery** that can be pulled from for the website and Facebook event pages, social media posts, email campaigns/newsletters, press release, etc. (whatever marketing you promised in your sponsorship proposals)

1. Example description:

Our first-ever, Wine Down Farm-to-Table Dinner is sold out! This Sunday, July 14 at Wine Down Ranch in Prineville, our guests will enjoy a delicious, four-course meal, catered by Chef Woody with

Landmark Catering, craft Oregon-made beverages, and the stunning scenery surrounding our ranch.

On Sunday, July 14, we encourage folks to arrive at 4:30 PM to receive their complimentary drink ticket and hear the co-owner of Wine Down Ranch, Roy Beyer, speak to a brief history of the ranch and projects in the works.

The first course of appetizers will be served at 5 PM, then progressively move through the salad course, and entree, concluding with dessert around 7 PM. The meal is being prepared by Landmark Catering (Sandwich Factory) and the homestyle dessert will be provided by L&S Farm & Garden. More details on the menu items to come.

- a. These descriptions can be altered/added to to thank sponsors once sponsorship details are finalized:

Wine Down Ranch represents one of several businesses along the High Desert Food Trail--a regional self-guided tour of culinary and agritourism offerings unique to Central Oregon--whose products will be featured at this event. This trail, managed by the High Desert Food and Farm Alliance, includes some of our farm sources for this meal, including two Prineville farms--Windy Acres Dairy Farm and L&S Farm and Garden--along with Central Oregon Locavore, an indoor farmers market in Bend. Additionally, two of our generous beverage sponsors are members of the High Desert Food Trail: Faith, Hope, and Charity Vineyards, donating one of their red wines, and Initiative Brewing, donating their Hefeweizen craft beer.

Beyond our wonderful High Desert Food Trail members, we have a few more farm sources, sponsors, and supporters to acknowledge. In Crook County, we'd like to thank Big Summit Beef, Canyon Moon Farms, and Prineville Produce for supplying fresh ingredients for this meal, as well as Wagner's Market for their generous contribution of Oregon-made white wines. We also thank Brittany's Bee's, based in Mitchell, OR, for supplying us with their artisan honey.

Lastly, a HUGE thank you to Visit Central Oregon, a sponsor and partner in this event, as well as our partners

at the High Desert Food and Farm Alliance and Explore Prineville, for all of their hard work.



- iii. Update social media and webpages for the event to promote ticket sales. Aim to have introductory “tickets are on sale” post a month from when the caterer needs the final count.

1. **Include paper flyers at spaces where physical tickets can be purchased** (need ticket design for physical tickets and digital ones for people to receive following payment).
2. **Ensure people who purchase tickets receive a receipt/ticket** (whether physical or digital).
- iv. **Plan on making several social media posts to promote the event**, especially if you need to sell a certain amount of tickets to turn a profit. It's good to vary the imagery and messaging if possible, or even introduce a giveaway to help boost ticket sales.
- v. **Create content to highlight sponsors once they are finalized, along with the farms/ranches/producers** sourcing ingredients for the farm-to-table dinner.
 1. Tag the sponsors where possible, whether that's in the image or in the caption
 - a. Type @ then their business name with spaces between words in their business name (like @Wine Down Ranch, not @WineDownRanch) – be patient, it may take a minute to show the results
- vi. If included in your sponsorship package, **write a press release to promote the sponsors and the event**, but don't forget to link to the ticket sales page!
 1. A press release can also be completed after the event, with the focus of acknowledging the sponsors and producers, as well as celebrating the accomplishments of the event.
 2. Some great media sources and contacts that are more likely to share your press release:
 - a. [Central Oregonian](#) (for Crook County news); Jason Chaney, jchaney@centraloregonian.com
 - b. [Cascade Business News](#) (for Central Oregon news); Marcee Hillman Moeggenberg, marcee@cascadebusnews.com
 - c. [The Bend Bulletin](#) (for Central Oregon news); Suzanne Roig, sroig@bendbulletin.com
- vii. **Update social media and webpages** to highlight sponsors and producers, as well as once tickets are sold out.

h. Create day-of event materials

- i. Menus (food and drink, potentially include allergens that were expressed, sources, sponsors where relevant)
- ii. Drink tickets (if you're including free beverages)
- iii. Additional signage (parking, drink labels, restrooms)
- iv. Sponsorship materials (flyers, banners, etc.)
- v. Resources (QR code to access relevant webpages, like a newsletter sign-up form; sign-in sheet with option to opt in for future event updates)

i. Pull off the event!

i. 3-5 days before the event...

1. **Make a final to-do list for the days leading up to the event** with key tasks, like the following:
 - a. Call your caterer, event rentals company, waste management company, product donors (i.e. craft brewery offering free beer keg and jockey box) to check in, answer questions, and **set a time for their arrival or to pick up their product**.
 - b. Create a **checklist of everything you may need** for this event (paper materials—flyers, menus, drink costs sign, business resources; glassware and ice if not included in the catering; donated product or service, like beverages or even port-a-potties; place setting materials, like napkins, plates, linens which are all commonly included in catering; small detail things, like a bug/bee draw, nice name tags for attendees, etc.; and ingredients for any food/drinks you may be preparing) so you can **check them off as you load them up for the event**.
 - c. **Talk over your to-dos and item checklist with someone else who has event planning experience**. It is very easy to overlook something when you have been preoccupied with so many details.
2. **Send out a reminder email to attendees** with as many details as possible in an organized structure that is easy to read. Think of this as a **know-before-you-go email**. Here is a [sample email reminder from the 2024 Wine Down Farm to Table Dinner](#).

ii. Day of the event...

1. **Get to the event venue early** to set up (and recruit help if you can!). Everything takes longer than anticipated, and some people will arrive 15-30 minutes earlier than you told them to.
 - a. You may need to help with setting up the tables, chairs, the bar and/or drink station, resources/sign-in table, drink or food preparation, placesettings, signage for parking and restrooms, etc.
2. **Sit at the resources/sign-in table to welcome folks**, explain some of the available resources, get them a name tag, and ask them to sign in and include contact information, and get a free drink ticket(s).
3. **Offer introductions once guests are seated** to kick-off the event! Introduce yourself, the venue hosts, the caterer, and potentially any key sponsors, with a general overview of where to find resources, and what to expect for the evening.

4. **Be available** to address unexpected situations, offer help where needed, and chat with guests at each table, if possible.
- iii. After the event...
 1. **Do a self-evaluation of the event.** No one knows this event better than you, so what did you notice as going well, and what could've been better.
 2. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis could be a helpful way to collect your thoughts. **Send an email follow-up**, acknowledging the sponsors/producers, thanking the attendees, and asking for feedback (potentially in the form of a survey, so you can improve the event for next time).
 - a. Check out this [sample feedback survey from the 2024 Wine Down Farm-to-Table Dinner](#)
 3. **Write a press release**, if you promised a press release in your sponsorship package, and didn't get around to writing one ahead of the event.
 4. **Give yourself a pat on the back**, you did it!