

## FOOD NOT BOMBS

Story and photos by Theresa Wolfwood

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*"This slogan requires no complicated analysis. The three words say it all. They point unerringly to the double challenge: to feed immediately people who are without adequate food, and to replace a system whose priorities are power and profit with one meeting the needs of all human beings." Howard Zinn*

FOOD NOT BOMBS (FNB) is an international movement which began in the USA. It started and continues with the philosophy that there is enough food in the world for everyone, the problem is distribution and preservation. The idea that everyone should have sufficient food and that it can be readily available is seemingly too revolutionary for our profit-based system to accept.

FOOD NOT BOMBS groups started over thirty years ago by collecting food that would be wasted – from stores, markets, small producers and preparing free food for the public. Food was and continues to be served free in public places and at activist events in many countries. Although it is a non-hierarchical, movement with independent groups, FNB groups are committed to serving vegetarian, mainly vegan, food, as local and organic as possible; the original concern about spoilage of meat product was reinforced by the aim not to support corporate animal production and killing. Vegan food is more plentiful and can distribute the plenty more equitably.

In Victoria FNB just celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary as it continues to serve food every Sunday. The present location is under a flowering cherry tree in Centennial Square. Food is prepared from donations collected on Saturday and transported by bicycle cart which are used as serving tables. Volunteers meet in different kitchens every week and make what they can from donations. Financial donations are used to buy supplies like cooking oil, grains and pulses.

Every Sunday, rain or shine the food is prepared, even on Christmas and other holidays. Hunger does not respect calendars. Once after a heavy snow storm hot food was transported and served from the back of a member's van when bicycles could not navigate.

People gather when the large colourful FNB banner is displayed on the lawn beside Douglas Street. They can help themselves, using recycled yogurt and other plastic containers. Extra food, not used in the hot dishes and salads, is given away; some people take the prepared food to save for a later time, maybe keeping some for the next day- another reason for serving vegan food. However if non-vegan food is donated, particularly hard boiled eggs, cheese and yogurt, Victoria FNB will serve it, rather than waste food.

The connection to militarization is key to understanding FNB. It is a philosophy for life and by rejecting military ideology of killing and death it emphasizes a culture of life and peace. Although many FNB activists have been arrested, assaulted, beaten and jailed for giving away food, the philosophy also embraces non-violence in all its activities. Groups accept no government or major corporate funding; small local donations are welcome.

Without outside dependence or individual leadership roles, the groups are less vulnerable and able to continue with whatever resources they can gather.

Distribution of food at peace, environment and social justice groups is one way of making links with a greater vision of a better world for all; I first encountered FNB on International Women's Day in March, 2006 cheerfully giving away delicious homemade food.

Two of the founders of FNB, C. T. Butler & Keith McHenry write in their FOOD, NOT BOMBS: *"It will take imagination and work to create a world without bombs. Food Not Bombs recognizes our part as providing sustenance for people at demonstrations and events so they can continue participating in the long-term struggle against militarism... We work against the perspective of scarcity that causes many people to fear cooperation among groups... we try to encourage feelings of abundance and recognition that if we cooperate together, all will become stronger."*

That perspective is honoured by FNB in Victoria by its dedicated volunteers.

To participate in Victoria FNB contact: [vicfnb@lists.resist.ca](mailto:vicfnb@lists.resist.ca) FNB Food not bombs Victoria



Photos: FNB volunteers with food cart and banner in Centennial Sq.



FNB volunteer Elena with Orange shirt Day artist and creator Eddy Charlie with his banner and FNB banner.

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