



STUDENT LIFE

# INTERNATIONAL CENTER

## MEAL @ Michigan: Meet, Eat, and American Life! *2020-2021 Virtual Hosting Guide*

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### Overview:

Thank you for participating in **MEAL @ Michigan!** The goal of this program is to create cultural exchange between U-M faculty/staff and international students. This exchange is meant to be informal and relaxed, so we hope this guide will ensure that your evening goes smoothly! If you have any questions, or suggestions to add to this guide for future hosts, please email Kelly Wagner at [kellwag@umich.edu](mailto:kellwag@umich.edu).

### Preparing my *VIRTUAL MEAL*:

While this program usually is hosted at faculty/staff homes, 2020 has brought the opportunity to host dinners in a virtual environment. Even in a virtual environment, this program is meant to be relaxed and informal, so please don't stress too much! There is a lot of room for you to customize and build your MEAL event to fit your level of comfort and interests. Given the virtual nature of the program, we will automatically assign all hosts 3-4 students.

### What Happens During Our *VIRTUAL MEAL*?

Getting to know new people can be tough (especially online)! So, be flexible and keep an open mind. This year, we are suggesting that you plan some sort of activity to help pass the time while hosting students online. We also suggest that you build in time for some ice breakers. Events are only suggested to last for 60-90 minutes.

### Activities centered around food:

- Sharing a recipe and doing a cooking demonstration or cooking together online.
  - Try to pick something with easily accessible ingredients if doing this. Otherwise, please plan to deliver some or most of the ingredients to your students in advance.
- Encouraging everyone to prepare their favorite meal and eating together. Participants can then share about their meal and why it means so much to them.

### Activities that are non-food related (in replacement of or complimenting your dinner):

- Play [an online game](#) together via Zoom/BlueJeans.
- Pumpkin carving/decorating (could deliver pumpkins to your students in advance).
- Talent show - participants can share a skill or hobby that they enjoy (playing music, writing poetry, showing off awards for sports, etc.)

### Other resources:

- [Virtual Ice Breaker Activities](#)
- [How to Host a Civic Dinner](#)

## **Mentoring Students vs. Advising Students**

While we hope that hosts and students may decide to continue an informal mentoring relationship after MEAL @ Michigan, there is no expectation that this must happen. If you feel connected to one or more of your participants, feel free to invite them to meet up again for a socially distanced coffee or lunch. Also, please keep in mind that students may want to discuss issues of immigration, employment, course load, and/or financial aid with you. Please refer them to the International Center ([icenter@umich.edu](mailto:icenter@umich.edu)) if this happens, as they have very specific rules and regulations that they must follow.

## **Rescheduling/Cancelling:**

In 2020, we all know that life happens. If for any reason you need to cancel, please email Kelly Wagner ([kellwag@umich.edu](mailto:kellwag@umich.edu)) and your students as soon as possible, preferably at least 24 hours in advance. If you are cancelling with less than 12 hours notice, please call or text your students as well.

If you do need to cancel your event, we hope that you will give students the option to reschedule with you instead of outright cancelling. If you cannot find another date/time that works for you and your students, we understand.

## **Getting the Conversation Going:**

Like any dinner party, conversations can vary. Here are some questions that you can use to keep the conversation flowing and get to know your participants better:

- **Family/Culture:**
  - Have you lived in your home country all your life? What city/cities?
  - How often do you travel back home or plan to travel back home?
  - How does your family celebrate holidays? What do those holidays celebrate/represent?
  - Do you have siblings? What are they like?
  - What do your parents do for a living?
- **Food:**
  - What is your main meal of the day? Does your family sit-down to enjoy this meal together?
  - What is your favorite meal? How do you prepare it?
  - What is your favorite cuisine outside your home culture?
- **Daily Life:**
  - What are your hobbies?
  - Do you enjoy/follow any sports? Do you play any sports?
  - Do you have a favorite TV show?
  - How are you liking Ann Arbor?
  - How is Ann Arbor similar/different from where you grew up?
- **School:**
  - What are you studying?
  - What classes are you taking this semester?
  - How are your classes similar/different from where you've previously studied?