



# Covenant House Cookbook 2025





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# Forward

At Covenant House, we see every day the healing power of a good meal. Many of our young people come to us with empty stomachs, not having eaten a full meal in days, weeks, even months.

For a youth who has experienced the pain of hunger, having the consistency of a home-cooked meal, made with love by our kitchen staff and funded by friends like you, gives them the hope and strength they need to overcome their challenges.

Each young person in our care receives three nutritious meals a day. From the moment they first walk through our doors, we are always there to feed them in body and in spirit. Even if a young person comes to us in the middle of the night, we will have a meal waiting for them.

That's how important food is at Covenant House. In this cookbook, we share with you some of our youth's favorite and most comforting dishes. It is our hope that, as you make these recipes for yourself and your loved ones, you too can experience the nourishing, revitalizing power of a meal cooked with love.



# Three Sisters Soup

from Covenant House Toronto

Young people at Covenant House recently came together for a community dinner and enjoyed a homemade Three Sisters Soup.

## **Ingredients:**

- 2 c. black beans
- 2 c. corn (canned or frozen)
- 1 butternut squash, peeled and cubed
- 4 carrots, peeled and cubed
- 1 onion, diced
- 10 mL (2 tsp) vegetable oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 c. vegetable broth
- 2 tsp. dried thyme
- 1 tsp. ground pepper
- 1 tsp. paprika



## **Preparation:**

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan. Add onion and sauté over medium heat, stirring often until golden, about 2 minutes.
2. Add carrots and garlic, and sauté for another 5 minutes, or until softened.
3. Add vegetable broth and bring to a boil.
4. Turn down heat and add cubed squash. Simmer covered for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Add beans, corn, thyme, pepper, and paprika. Stir and simmer another few minutes, until squash is soft when tested with a fork.





Heat: Medium-high

Cook time: 20 minutes

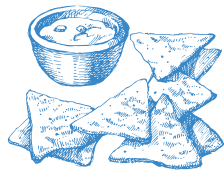
Number  
of servings: 4

# Plato Hondureño Nachos con Carne

from Covenant House Honduras

## **Ingredients:**

1 bag tortilla chips	Fresh cilantro
½ lb. minced ground beef	2 jalapeños (optional)
1 onion	Olive oil
2 tomatoes	Salt & pepper
5 oz. shredded cheddar cheese	



## **Preparation:**

1. Peel and dice the onion. Add a little bit of olive oil to a deep pan, and heat the pan over medium heat.
2. When the pan is hot, add the onion and let it cook until it's transparent. Meanwhile, add salt and pepper to the chopped meat according to taste. You may also add some powdered garlic as well.
3. Once the onion is transparent, add the ground beef to the pan and let it cook until just golden brown, breaking it up with the back of spoon so it becomes minced.
4. While the beef cooks, cut the tomatoes in half, remove the seeds and pulp, dice, and set aside. Cut the jalapeños in strips and chop some of the fresh cilantro according to taste, and set aside.
5. Arrange the tortilla chips on a platter that can go into the oven. When the meat is ready, add it to the tomatoes and jalapeños, and then add this mixture to the tortilla chips.
6. Cover the mixture with the shredded cheddar cheese. Put the platter into the oven, and let it cook until the cheese has melted. Remove the dish from the oven, add fresh cilantro, and get ready for some true deliciousness, because your nachos con carne are now ready to be enjoyed!



Heat: High

Cook time: 15-20 minutes

Number  
of servings: 2-4



# One Meal Can Change a Life

When young people find themselves without a home, they focus on survival. That means securing their next meal and finding a safe place to sleep every night.

Some youth on the streets are forced to make heartbreaking choices, like sorting through a dumpster to find food, or worse — trusting a trafficker who promises food and safety but instead exploits them.

But giving a homeless young person a meal can change it all. That's why, when youth come to Covenant House, the first thing we offer them is a meal to provide comfort and immediate relief from hunger.

**It costs just \$3.80 to serve one hot meal to a young person in our care. But the impact of that single meal goes far beyond.**

Through that meal, we start to build trust that can heal the hearts of young people and help them off the streets and on a path toward stability. Changing a life really can start with a simple act of compassion — a meal, a bed to sleep in, and a promise that they aren't alone anymore.

It is the support of friends like you that means we can keep our promise to help these youth on their journey home, to be here with meals, safe shelter, and unconditional love. And from there, they can build a future without limits.







# RED BEAN BABY

## Podcast

*A podcast on maternal health, first-time parents,  
and Covenant House New Orleans*



In 2023, Gioia Barcone began hosting the Red Bean Baby Podcast, touching on issues that young people face, including homelessness and parenting.

In her podcast, Gioia pulls from her own life experiences. In 2016, she became homeless with her two small children. That's when this young mom found Covenant House, where she learned a lot about herself and how to better cope with life as a parent.

**Start listening to the series today to hear Gioia's inspiring story.**



**Red Bean Baby on Spotify**



**Red Bean Baby on Amazon Podcasts**

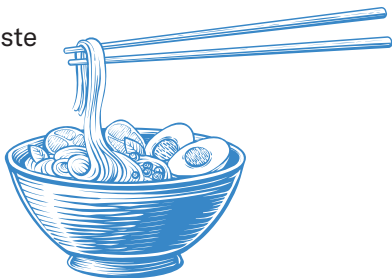
**Or go to [covenanthouse.buzzsprout.com](https://covenanthouse.buzzsprout.com)**

# Yakamein Soup

from Covenant House New Orleans

## **Ingredients:**

3-4 lb. stewing beef roast  
(substitute with chicken, pork, or shrimp)  
2 tbsp. beef base  
1 tsp. seasoned salt  
2 tsp. Creole or Cajun seasoning  
1 tsp. onion powder  
Kosher salt and cracked pepper to taste  
1 lb. spaghetti noodles  
8 eggs  
1 green onion, sliced  
Soy sauce/hot sauce to taste  
4-5 qts. of water



## **Preparation:**

1. Fill a stockpot halfway with water. Add beef base, seasoned salt, Cajun seasoning, onion powder, a pinch of salt, and a pinch of pepper, and whisk.
2. Place meat in the pot, add water so it covers meat by about an inch. Boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 2-3 hours or until meat begins to fall apart.
3. Remove meat and shred with forks, then return to the pot and hold over low heat.
4. Hard-boil the eggs, then cool and peel.
5. Cook spaghetti noodles according to directions on package.
6. Place serving of noodles in a bowl, add shredded meat, a halved boiled egg, and 1 ½ cups of broth.
7. Add chopped green onion, soy sauce, and/or hot sauce to taste and enjoy!



Heat: Medium-high

Cook time: 3-4 hours

Number  
of servings: 4-5

Recipe

# Garlic Ginger Chicken Thighs

Staff Favorite

## **Ingredients:**

2.2 lb. bone-in skin on chicken thighs  
1 tbsp. garlic finely minced  
1 tbsp. fresh ginger, finely grated  
1 tbsp. soy sauce (I used a combination of dark and light soy sauce)  
1 tsp. hot sauce or as needed  
½ tbsp. onion powder  
2 tbsp. olive oil  
salt and black pepper to taste (adjust the salt to taste if using dark soy sauce)



## **Preparation:**

1. Preheat the oven to 365° F/180° C.
2. To a large mixing bowl, add chicken thighs, onion powder, minced garlic, minced ginger, soy sauce, hot sauce, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Mix to combine, making sure that the thighs are well coated.
3. Cover the bowl with a cling film (plastic wrap) and leave to marinate for at least 30 minutes for up to 24 hours for optimum flavor.
4. Arrange the chicken thighs skin side down on a rimmed baking sheet, and bake in the oven for 15 minutes. Flip the chicken thighs so that the skin side faces up and bake for another 20-25 minutes or until the skin is crispy or the internal temperature registers 165° F/75° C.
5. Sprinkle some sesame seeds (chopped cilantro or parsley) on the chicken, serve, and enjoy!





**Heat:** Medium-high

**Number  
of servings:** 3-4

**Cook time:** 20-25 minutes

# Chocolate Cake

from Covenant House Guatemala

## **Ingredients:**

- 1 lb. sifted soft flour
- 1 lb. 8 oz. sugar
- 5 medium eggs
- 8 oz. vegetable oil
- 1 ½ c. bitter chocolate
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tbsp. vanilla
- 1 tbsp. salt
- 13 oz. water
- 2 c. milk

## **Preparation:**

1. Weigh all the ingredients precisely.
2. Sift the dry ingredients.
3. Beat together oil, sugar, eggs, salt, milk, and vanilla for 3 minutes.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and beat for 3 minutes more.
5. Add hot water and beat for 2 minutes.
6. Fill the greased and floured pans with the batter.
7. Bake at 356° F (180° C) for 20 minutes.
8. Lower the temperature to 320° F (160° C) for 40-50 minutes.
9. Remove the cake and let it cool.

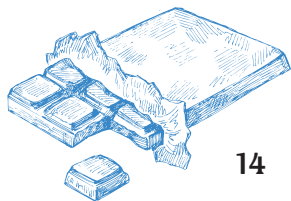
## **Chocolate Ganache**

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 lb. dark chocolate
- 1 c. cream

### **Preparation:**

1. Chop up the chocolate.
2. Heat the cream and incorporate it into the chopped chocolate to dissolve it. Chill to an appropriate consistency.
3. Ice the cake.





**Heat:** Medium-high

**Cook time:** 60-70 minutes

**Number  
of servings:** 8 slices

Recipe



# Pouring Passion Into Food Provision

Last year, Covenant House served 1.8 million meals to thousands of young people facing homelessness and human trafficking. That's 100,000 more meals than we served the year before. It's a daunting task.

"But not when you care," says David Holt, food and facilities manager at Covenant House Michigan.

At both our Detroit and Grand Rapids sites, David is responsible for everything from managing the food budget and sourcing food and meals, to training, motivating, and managing the chefs and food services teams.

From the time he draws up the budget, to the moment he watches a youth dig into a delicious, nutritious meal, that young person's well-being is at the center of all he does.

David's is a disciplined passion. It's based on years of experience as a chef in busy kitchens and his deep embrace of Covenant House's mission of unconditional love, absolute respect, and relentless support for the youth we serve.



**"When you're a youth coming off the streets, or from a broken home, or just getting to Covenant House, it's very important that when you get to me, I'm gonna feed you well, and you're gonna feel welcome."**

**— David**





“Food is medicine,” David says. “It brings joy to our youth. It takes away food insecurity, and that’s important because food insecurity makes a lot of residents feel like they can’t get a job, can’t get an education.”

David also works hard to encourage, coach, and train his cooks. The constancy they experience is another important ingredient to a young person’s success. Youth need “a familiar place with a familiar face,” he says.

“I grew up poor myself, and when I was getting the meals at school, the lady that was feeding us, I just remember feeling safe with her, feeling good. You could have a conversation with her and you didn’t have to think about the situation you were in,” he says.

“You have to pour your heart into something,” he tells his chefs and food services teams, and that’s what David Holt does every day at Covenant House Michigan. “To be creative, it has to come from a place of passion, from something you care for.”

And that is what turns a seemingly daunting task into a joy.



# Ways to Get Involved

## Learn more.

Read more about the work we do and the youth we help.



Stay up to date on all Covenant House news at [covenanthouse.org/charity-blog](http://covenanthouse.org/charity-blog)



## Volunteer.

Show up for our youth to show them you care.

You can help serve meals, participate in arts or sports with residents, or be a mentor.



Scan here to see how you can get involved.

[covenanthouse.org/volunteer](http://covenanthouse.org/volunteer)



## Sleep Out.



Raise funds and awareness for youth homelessness with a Sleep Out!

Join an event near you or host your own.

Scan here to join the movement.



[covenanthouse.org/sleepout](http://covenanthouse.org/sleepout)

## Follow us on social media.



Share our posts to help get the word out about the youth homelessness crisis and how to help.

 [instagram.com/covenant\\_house](https://www.instagram.com/covenant_house)

 [facebook.com/CovenantHouse](https://www.facebook.com/CovenantHouse)

 [linkedin.com/company/covenant-house/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/covenant-house/)



# Covenant House®

Covenant House is the largest, primarily privately funded charity in North and Central America providing immediate and long-term support for young people facing homelessness and survivors of human trafficking through unconditional love, absolute respect, and relentless support.

Covenant House's doors are open 24/7 in 34 cities to all young people who need housing and help, and all our services and programs are available at no cost. Our North Star is ending youth homelessness as we know it today.

To learn more about Covenant House and youth we serve, please visit **[covenanthouse.org](https://www.covenanthouse.org)**.

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