



Programs at The Stop Community Food Centre

Source: The Stop Community Food Centre

The Stop was founded in the 1970s as one of North America's first food banks. Since 1998, it has grown into a comprehensive community food centre, and is the organization that the community food centre model is based on. The following is a list of the programs offered at The Stop, as of 2012, to provide readers with a sense of the extensive program mix that our model has evolved from.

Food Bank and Drop-in: These programs aim to meet community members most immediate food needs. At the food bank, people can access a three-day supply of food once a month. We strive to provide a dignified environment and the highest-quality, freshest food possible. At our drop-in, community members enjoy nutritious food and an opportunity to connect with others as well as find access to information on social issues, housing, health care, and welfare.

Community Kitchens: Groups range from Sabor Latino for Spanish speakers to Positive Parenting with Food for new moms, a seniors cooking group to drop-in programs for Shovel and Spoon graduates at The Green Barn. Participants cook and eat together, learn and share new skills and make new friendships with others over nutritious food.

Shovel & Spoon: Working in partnership with other local agencies, this cooking and gardening program offers a therapeutic and supportive environment for learning new skills, creating connections with nature and one another.

Healthy Beginnings and Family Support: A team of social and health care professionals, settlement, family support and community workers offer a pre- and post-natal nutrition and support program for women living on low incomes. Activities include breastfeeding support, information about healthy eating and workshops on a variety of relevant topics.

Community Action Program: We offer support and training so community members can speak out about and work for change on issues of poverty, hunger, and inadequate income. There are a variety of ways for people to get involved, from attending social justice training to joining the Bread and Bricks social justice group, attending film nights and discussions to becoming peer advocates who use their own experience navigating social services to provide one-on-one assistance to others who need help accessing community resources.



Community Gardens: At our 9,000-square-foot garden in Earlscourt Park, and the recently-added site in Hillcrest Park near The Green Barn, we engage community members in growing, tending, and harvesting more than 2,500 lbs of organic produce. The harvest is shared between garden participants and The Stop.

Bake Oven & Markets: At our main site in the low-income Davenport West neighbourhood, a weekly affordable fresh food market and seasonal weekly pizza-baking sessions at our outdoor, wood-fired bake oven bring neighbours together and create a bustling friendly public space. At The Green Barn, a year-round market offers everything from sustainably grown vegetables and fruit to ice cream and coffee and has become a neighbourhood meeting place, attracting about 1,000 people, each week, while providing an important source of income for local farmers.

Greenhouse and Compost Systems: Unique in Canada, our greenhouse at The Green Barn is designed to Gold LEED environmental standards and grows organic produce year-round. Children and adults gain hands-on experience in sustainable food production. The produce grown there is used for drop-in meals and other programs at our main site. Our large composting units and vermicomposting bins turn food waste into a growing medium for the greenhouse and gardens.

After School Program & Summer Camp: Offered to lower-income kids Grade 3 to 6, our free after-school program runs three days a week and provides hands-on fun in the kitchen, garden, and greenhouse, as well as art, games, and homework help. In this program, as well as the intensive summer camp, the aim is to inspire children to enjoy healthy food, build skills to grow and prepare it, and engage them with food system issues.

Sustainable Food Systems Education Program: Grade 5 students from local schools attend a series of five workshops that are focused on food issues and support the Ontario curriculum. Using games, tastings, and hands-on activities, students learn about the many dimensions of the food system — from sustainable growing and cooking skills to social justice and biodiversity.

YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard): This program connects city dwellers who have land to share with people who want to garden but don't have access to space for growing food. A community and skill-building project, YIMBY matches gardeners as well as offering workshops, a tool lending library and social opportunities to gardeners.

Global Roots Garden: Seniors from eight cultural groups tend demonstration gardens at The Green Barn with help from a diverse group of youth. The youth and garden visitors learn about the foods and growing techniques of diverse cultures and highlight their contribution to Toronto's food landscape.



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Social Enterprise: Led by The Stop's in-house chefs, we host a variety of initiatives aimed at raising funds for our front-line programs. These include high-quality, locally-sourced catering services and our acclaimed Food for Change dinner series (in which participants join the kitchen crew and learn what it's like to prepare a gourmet meal for paying customers, or simply come to enjoy the dinner).