

Small Planet Institute & Slow Food USA -An Organizer's Guide

Why table tents?

Frances Moore Lappé developed the “table tent” idea after speaking to college students around the country, and hearing the same questions— How can we motivate students to take action? How can we change the food service on our campus? How can we get more people involved??

Small Planet Institute and Slow Food USA have partnered on this project to provide students with a tool to:

1. Show the relationship between individual food choices and the environment.
2. Increase awareness about the connection between food and climate change.
3. Motivate people to take action to reclaim our food system by offering practical solutions.
4. Encourage involvement in campus activism and provide an outreach tool to recruit members to student environmental groups.

Where do I put them?

- Anywhere people eat and congregate!
- Suggested locations: campus dining facilities, library cafés, off -campus cafés where students study and have group meetings; at special events or conferences.

How do I make sure they don't get thrown away?

We suggest you seek permission from someone at the venue to display the tents:

- **On campus locations- dining halls, library cafés.**
 - Dining Services Director. If you are looking to place table tents across all the dining halls on campus, he/she may be able to give you overall approval prior to approaching managers at individual dining halls.
 - Managers of individual dining halls and cafés. If you have a large campus, you can divide students in your group to contact each dining hall.
- **Off campus locations e.g. neighborhood cafés.**
 - Speak with the manager to seek permission. It could be a good way to reach out to people in the community about these ideas as well.
- **Special events and conferences.**
 - Contact event co-coordinators and students involved with planning events and conferences and ask if you can incorporate the table tents and/or factsheet into their activity.

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Other tips

- Carry samples with you to show when you are asking permission for placement.
- Assign someone to look after a certain area, where the location is convenient for them to pass by en route to class or home/dorm. Replace the table tents if they disappear.
- Ask the dining services director and/or manager if they will notify the cleaning teams about the table tents and ask them not to remove them.
- Rotate the table tents—move them around from one venue to the next. If they start to look messy, replace them.

Ideas for action

- Plan a day where your group members go around to different locations to distribute the table tents.
- Make sure the member placing the tents knows about any special agreements your group has with the particular establishment (e.g. one tent per table).
- Generate interest by starting a conversation about the facts displayed on the tents with friends and classmates.
- Check locations periodically to monitor whether table tents are being removed or taken by students. Replace as necessary.
- Identify any locations where table tents have a high rate of “disappearance.” You may need to monitor the tents or speak with the manager of the establishment again if the tents are getting thrown out or vandalized. If people are taking the tents, you may want to print extras for that location if budget permits.
- If you hear other students talking about them, ask where they saw them and their opinion. This will help identify locations where table tents have the broadest reach.
- Watch for upcoming events on campus where table tents could be displayed.
- Carry a few in your backpack to drop here and there when the right location appears!

Partnering with other student groups

Get more people involved! Invite student groups with interest in food and environmental issues to work with you. Partnering with another student group will make the project easier to implement both in logistics and for printing costs. Note that the factsheet is available as a Word document, so you can modify to include your logo or a short announcement for your group.

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Tips for printing and distributing table tents

- When possible, use recycled, no-bleach, or low gloss cardstock paper.
- If printing and assembling table tents yourself, follow instructions provided.
- Copies can also be made from the PDF at a copy center.
- If they are being used at an event, ask the organizers to collect and return them after: reuse!

Suggested activity checklist

- Gather members and brainstorm on locations for table tents.
- Brainstorm possible partners and contact.
- Evaluate budget to decide on what kind of tents (color/b&w) to print and the maximum number that can be printed.
- Decide on final list of locations to approach.
- Research each location and write up the list of contact for persons to obtain necessary approvals.
- Assign person(s) to each of these locations.
- Contact person with authority at each location to set up meetings to obtain approval and discuss logistics of placing table tents or posting the factsheet.
- Determine how many table tents are needed for each location.
- Report on each location and tally up the total tents and or factsheets needed.
- Print and assemble.
- Agree on method of distribution.
- Distribute tents.
- Monitor each location.
- Watch out for campus events where table tents could be displayed.

For more tips, tools and resources, visit www.smallplanet.org and www.slowfoodusa.org. Please email us with questions and comments at info@smallplanet.org