



Spotlight on Crestwood Food for the Body & Soul

I am willing to bet that if you were raised in the church, one of your first (and best) memories is one of food. I remember the basement fellowship hall in my home church where women scurried around in aprons, stirring chili, arranging salad and dessert tables while we children played, watched, and smelled the delicious odors. My sons' memories of Crestwood involve a volcano cake and their first taste of cookies and cream ice-cream.

The huge kitchen in the Mission Center has appeared since I was here years before. It looks like food still plays a big part in the life of Crestwood today.

While I haven't been in THAT many church kitchens, Crestwood's food center wins the prize for the largest, best arranged, and most impressive equipment. Added in 2000 when the Mission Center was built, the kitchen features many restaurant-level items including multiple ovens (even a convection oven), a number of refrigerators and freezers, a warming contraption with slots for many trays. There are pots and pans of every size and a really impressive restaurant-type dishwasher which seems to move dishes through it. I really need to see it work to understand how it functions. There are drawers and cabinets galore stuffed with utensils, and a good-size pantry that houses a circus-like popcorn popper. I can't think of a thing a kitchen should have that I didn't see.

I am told by church historian Fran McKinney that there was much excitement when the kitchen was being planned and built. There was an involved kitchen committee whose members worked to get it just right with extensive planning—even all the way down to finding the right flooring that wouldn't be slippery.

You can tell it must have been an expensive endeavor, but I was told that members just pitched in to make it happen. People would hear of a need and step forward to purchase it. The names of the donors seem to have been forgotten, but in some way, that is good because it feels very much like Crestwood's kitchen belongs to everyone.

When I went snooping around one morning, I found Roberta Buckley alone there, sorting through and organizing the drawers. She told me a story about when she was young. People at their church were complaining about the weeds around the building. Her mother turned to Roberta, and, as she started weeding, said something like "If something bothers you, just get busy and fix it." That's what Roberta was doing that morning. She was organizing the kitchen.

It seems the poor kitchen had its own form of Covid while the church was partially closed down during the height of the pandemic. The very large ice machine stopped working and water pooled unnoticed, causing damage and mold growth. The mold issue has now been resolved, and cabinets are in the process of being replaced. Apparently, the kitchen's organization was up-ended during that period. Several people cringed at the thought of my spotlighting it at this time. But either I am used to my own disorganization, or people like Roberta have been quietly at work putting things back into place, getting the church ready to jump in with more dinners, celebrations, and gatherings. It looked fine to me.

Either my investigative skills are weak, or Crestwood's kitchen is like those in other churches I am familiar with. I was unable to find a particular group or person responsible for keeping the kitchen organized and updated. Apologies if there is such a group. Traditionally, such things fell to women's groups— but times, they are a changin'. Trying to find who is responsible for the kitchen, I queried, "What if a new pot or ladle is needed?"

Who would you ask?" There was a thoughtful pause. "I don't know. I guess I'd just go buy one and donate it." The spirit of community and our commitment to it remains in the kitchen area.

I had to smile when I realized the big kitchen is not the only one in Crestwood. Kitchens seem to be everywhere, and all have a history. We must like to eat! There used to be a small kitchen in Hopper Hall when I was here before, but it has been replaced by a significant facility in the Child Care Center watched over by a full-time cook.

There is a little kitchen in the administrative wing that I remember from years ago. Before the Mission Center, meetings were often held in the open space in that wing. Refreshments were prepared in the small space in the hall. I was told the appliances were donated there as well. It is now mostly used by the staff. There also used to be a kitchen in the choir room I am told.

There is a really nice kitchen in the Children's wing behind the craft room. It sports a stove, sink, plenty of counterspace and cabinets. There is even a nice washer and dryer for towels, crib sheets, baptismal robes, and other soiled items.

While it can't actually be called a kitchen, there is a sink and cabinets in the arts and crafts room where children were making slime when I visited. Clearly, the sink was needed!

In looking for Nooks and Crannies last week, we found yet another full kitchen behind the chancel where they used to prepare communion. Glasses were filled and stored in the refrigerator, and afterwards everything had to be washed. There is a stove there where the communion cups were boiled and sterilized, according to Fran McKinney. Those days are of the past with our recent adoption of disposable plastic communion cups.

As churches change in coming years, activities and priorities will change. But I predict that there will always be a need for a kitchen where food is prepared that draws members together. Sharing a meal is a social act of communion that brings us together in a meaningful way. Eating with others is good for the soul as well as for the stomach.

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If there is some area of the church you would like to know more about, please share your ideas with me. Let's explore together.

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