

The Project Feast Giving Community

Empower the Change

What is the Project Feast Giving Community?

Project Feast's Giving Community is an opportunity for major donors to empower the change in the lives of our culinary apprentices. We appreciate the support already given and the opportunity for one-time donations is still available. As a part of the Project Feast Giving Community, we want to engage major donors who are ready to take action in their lives and stand with immigrants and refugees. After learning more about our team and program model, major donors of our Giving Community donate \$500 or more for a minimum period of three years.

Why do we need you to *empower the change*?

In 2016, Washington State welcomed more than 3,200 refugees. Many are escaping war, communal violence, natural disasters, poverty and other circumstances that make their home countries unlivable. The Greater Seattle area is among the largest destinations for refugees from Ukraine, Burma, Somalia, Bhutan, and Iraq in the United States.

“I was thinking I’m alone here and it’s only me having these fears and struggles in the new country.”

Over the past few years, King County has become more diverse. In 2000, 15.4% of the population was foreign born, increasing to 21.2% in 2015. Furthermore, Kent, WA (Project Feast’s location) is the tenth most diverse city in the United States. Too often our immigrant and refugee communities feel marginalized as opportunities to prosper remain out of reach. As a result, an alarming number of new immigrants and refugees from these countries suffer higher levels of unemployment and earn far less than their native-born counterparts, making it a challenge to support their families.

One of our alumna shared *“I was thinking I’m alone here and it’s only me having these fears and struggles in the new country.”* But she is not alone, most refugees and immigrants who walk through our door share the same thoughts and feelings. Project Feast offers these refugees and immigrants who face many barriers, an opportunity to gain confidence, marketable culinary skills, and a platform to share their home country’s cuisine and culture.





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While we earn money through our catering and training café, the profits alone are insufficient to fund the infrastructure that our programs require. Your donation will go directly towards these expenses – *to sponsor our culinary apprentices*. Your donation allows our refugee and immigrant cooks to take their first steps in their future culinary career. Thank you for your interest in our Giving Community, below is a detailed explanation of our programs!

Project Feast's philosophy: we believe that *food has the power to break barriers*. We recognize that our refugee and immigrant communities bring culinary knowledge and skills with them from their home countries as talented home cooks. We view these skills as valuable assets and aim to make them marketable. Therefore, we focus on job training, leadership opportunities, and confidence building.

Project Feast was founded in 2013 and over the years, our models for our Culinary Apprenticeship program has changed. With our mission and values steering us, we will continue to evaluate and improve our programs.

Project Feast is a nonprofit, social enterprise with a mission to transform the lives of refugees and immigrants by providing pathways to sustainable employment in the food industry, and enriching communities through intercultural exchange.



Project Feast's values:

Community Driven

Project Feast participants and alumni help shape our future. We create space for refugee and immigrant community to take ownership of our programs and strategic vision.

Solution Oriented

We work together to overcome challenges and maintain a positive outlook. We strive to bounce back from adversity.

Do Our Best

We do our best and expect the same of other team members, participants, board, volunteers and partners.

Sustainability

We strive to achieve a healthy balance between social, financial, and environmental sustainability

Our culinary apprenticeship program is four months, Monday-Friday from 9am-2:30pm. Upon graduation, apprentices will have hands-on experience and knowledge about working in a commercial kitchen. They also receive 20 credits from Highline College through our accredited classes, a weekly stipend, and childcare if they qualify.



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In 2017, we plan to enroll 18 culinary apprentices. In our first class, we graduated two of the four apprentices and both are employed. Our second class has seven apprentices. Furthermore, our Monday lecture classes are open to other refugee and immigrant participants not enrolled in our apprenticeship program. We had one student attend all Monday workshops and 4 more attend at least 2 sessions.

To date we have enrolled 11 apprentices from 8 different countries, Ethiopia, D.R. Congo, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Ukraine, and Vietnam. We have had 5 immigrants, 5 refugees, and 1 asylum seeker. This culinary apprenticeship model was created with input from our Commercial Kitchen Basics alumni who wanted a more intensive, challenging, and longer program. We are excited to continue to improve our culinary apprenticeship program, empowering more refugee and immigrant cooks.

Our training café, Ubuntu Street Café provides real-life experience for our refugee and immigrant cooks. Our international menu changes every 4 months with each new class of apprentices who all contribute a recipe from their home country. Apprentices speak English with guests, practice customer service, and learn how to work in a commercial kitchen during lunch service. Our café is open Wednesday-Friday 11am-1pm and located in the Titusville building on 202 W Gowe St in Kent.

A day in the life of a Project Feast Apprentice:

Monday- Lecture-based class

The first few weeks focus on hygiene, knife skills, and completing the WA State Food Worker Card and then we divide the program into three modules: Introduction to Menu Design, Customer Service, and Job Readiness. On these days, apprentices may be learning how to double a recipe or how many ounces are in a quart. They learn how to design a menu and write recipes. Our instructor may be working with apprentices on how to pronounce and spell kitchen vocabulary words. They practice interview skills by role playing with a partner. Or review each other's resumes and cover letters with the professor's guidance.

Tuesday- Preparing food for our catering events and our café, Ubuntu Street Café

Tuesdays are prep days! Apprentices work in our commercial kitchen and practice their knife skills. Our instructor teaches them how to move in the kitchen safely and how to make different recipes. Each apprentice contributes dishes to our menu. Therefore, they may be teaching the other apprentices and our instructor about their recipes too. Apprentices practice doubling recipes and cooking food for our catering events often serving 50-100 people.

Wednesday-Friday- Working the café

Our door is open and we invite the public to our café. Apprentices learn to cook on the line, clean dishes quickly, and how to move safely and efficiently in a kitchen during service. They may be working the cash register, interacting with guests about the menu, café and our programs. Or helping to clear tables and ask guests how their lunch was that day. Apprentices



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open and close the café, setting out the street sign to alert the public we are open and preparing the tables for guests.

Our community events are entry points for people to engage with a new culture through food. These relationships take time, energy, respect and proving a genuine interest in learning about a different culture. We challenge our participants to show up and to lean into their discomfort.

We offer three different events:

- Migrating Meals: a monthly series featuring a different immigrant or refugee owned restaurant where we share a meal and engage in meaningful discussion (location alternates between Seattle and South King County)
- Pop Up Events: events showcasing a different chef, culture, and cuisine hosted at our café
- Potluck for Peace: an initiative launched in partnership with Interfaith Community Sanctuary that focuses on bringing people of all backgrounds together to share food from their home countries and engage in peace building dialogue



Thank you for learning about Project Feast and our refugee and immigrant cooks! We have also included letters from the Project Feast Team to learn more about the impact of our programs.

If you hold similar values and want to *empower the change* through the Project Feast Giving Community, please pledge today by visiting our [Donate page](#) on our website or mail a check to 202 W Gowe St Kent, WA 98032. Any questions contact Lauren McParland at lauren@projectfeast.org.



Letters from our Project Feast Team

A letter from Taghreed Ibrahim, Project Feast Alumna

How did Project Feast change my life?

When I came here four years ago, I was a shy Iraqi woman trying her best to speak English. But she had no idea what kind of life she wanted for herself. Until one day, I received an email from a friend telling me about this organization. I was so excited and nervous at the same time. I did the interview and signed my name up for the class (Project Feast's original program, Commercial Kitchen Basics). The most amazing things about Project Feast is meeting people from different countries, learning about their food and culture, and listening to their stories. I was thinking I'm alone here and it's only me having these fears and struggles in the new country. At Project Feast, it feels like we all are a real family. **We support each other talking one language, which is simply just food.**

On that day, I took my first step and I never stopped. From new jobs and trainings to meeting people I never dreamed of knowing. That shy woman changed, becoming a pastry student and soon to be chef. Recently, she gave a tour of her college, talking with passion about how she loves her work and presenting a chocolate demo for them.

I'm a different person today. When I was looking at myself before I didn't know who I wanted to be and what I wanted in life...but not today. I'm a confident woman and know what my next step will be. All of that happened and is still happening because of this organization's support. I will always be thankful to my second family at Project Feast.

Thanks,
Taghreed Ibrahim





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A letter from Veena Prasad, Project Feast Founder & Executive Director

Democrat vs. Republican. Progressive vs. liberal. Legal vs. illegal. Immigrant vs. American. Black vs. White. Good vs. Bad. Our news lately has been filled with rhetoric and stereotypes. From politics to every day life, discussions have seemingly devolved to binary positions.

My twins will turn 3 in a month. At home we work hard to instill in them independence, kindness and the ability to work hard to achieve goals. As a mother, it is natural to wonder (and worry) about the world they are growing up in. How will my bi-racial children be accepted in society? Will they feel comfortable speaking their father tongue and mother tongue in public? If I send them Indian food in their lunch boxes, will they feel embarrassed to eat it in front of their friends? They will have many privileges that my husband and I, both first generation immigrants, extend to them. They will most likely be fine.



But what about other kids who don't grow up with the same privileges as mine? What about other newly arrived refugee and immigrant children and their families who are seeking safety and are starting all over again in a new and unfamiliar country.

I envision a world for the next generation that is more welcoming to strangers. A world where we seek what we have in common with each other over what makes us different. I can only hope my kids will experience nuanced discussions and develop the ability to take on different perspectives.

At Project Feast, we see refugees and immigrants not just as people in need but as leaders, as multi-faceted people with skills and strengths. We hold this principle to heart when designing our programs. This is also evident in community events like Migrating Meals that offer avenues for deep discussions on various topics around culture and cuisine. We seek to get beyond labels and rhetoric, transform fear into curiosity, and enable a community where each of us feels empowered.

I'm grateful and proud to be able to personally and professionally invest my time, efforts and money in tangible solutions that not only make a difference in the lives of individual refugees and immigrants but also in our community at large. You each give me hope. Our apprentices give me hope. And so each time the news fills me with despair, I soldier on buoyed by the sense of Ubuntu I feel all around me. For my twins, for me, for us.

Yours in Community,
Veena



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A letter from Jaqueline Garcia, Project Feast Board President

My name is Jaqueline Garcia. I am from Michoacán Mexico, a state rich in tradition and culture. I came to the U.S. seven years ago with my husband, who is a Mexican/American citizen. As a new immigrant I felt intimidated for my new reality and I started to bake and cook as a way to avoid depression. I was teaching baking classes to a group of moms into the cabana in my apartment complex. A friend sent me an email about a program to learn basic commercial kitchen skills to work in the food industry (Project Feast's original program, Commercial Kitchen Basics). I was very curious about the organization's course and I registered.



When I was taking the course, I had the opportunity to learn from other cultures and it was a process for me to feel more comfortable with the diversity. I realize the wonderful opportunity to learn and share with people around the world. Not only sharing recipes but also stories, sometimes painful experiences about what it means to be labeled as an immigrant or refugee.

Project Feast for me is a window to the diversity with a feeling of compassion, solidarity, and respect. After graduating from Project Feast I noticed I was more confident with my environment and I discovered my passion was more related to social justice and economic development for immigrants and refugees. Thanks to Project Feast I got connected with my two part time jobs one in Food Innovation Network as a community engagement co-chair and a position at Highline College as a Microenterprise Specialist, supporting the Latino Community to start small businesses.

This is my second year as the Project Feast board president. After graduating and volunteering for Project Feast activities, I received the invitation to participate in the board. I accepted the volunteer position in the board to give back to this wonderful organization and learn from wonderful people around the world.

Project Feast not only gives the training to gain the necessary skills to work in the food industry, it's an organization that connect immigrants and refugees with additional resources, job opportunities, and the most important: connection to each other and bringing hope while we cook a delicious international recipe.

Sincerely,
Jaqueline



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A Letter from Lisa Nakamura, Project Feast Executive Chef

Hello Universe,

People often comment to me about the good I am doing, how Project Feast is important for our community, especially in today's political climate.

My job, and my desire, is to help a group of people from disparate backgrounds reach a point where they can obtain, and most importantly, KEEP jobs in commercial kitchens here in the states. It sounds like a wonderful goal—altruistic, generous, and compassionate. In truth, it is one of the more difficult things I have tried to do.



Every apprentice has their untold story of grief, hardship, fear, and trials. They get frustrated and disheartened by the constant damage of English, math and that darn imperial measuring system. There are days when they don't believe they can make it. There are days when there isn't enough chocolate for me.

But then I see progress, like when I walk into the kitchen after yet another Cash and Carry run, and find the kitchen humming with activity. The apprentices assume their routines and are becoming cooks.

The end goal is sustainable employment, but every apprentice has their own trajectory towards that target. Sometimes the arc of learning seems to become concave. It doesn't go straight up. It's not a field of daisies; it's a real tough struggle, for them, for me. I'm trying to get them all to the finish line at the same time.

Change happens. We make progress, by the inch and by the mile. Slowly, surely, and with your help, at the end of four months, they will have found the beginnings of their strength, their voice, and their abilities.

Lisa Nakamura
Executive Chef



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A Letter from Molly Payne, Project Feast Program Coordinator

As a twenty-something millennial, I have been raised in the world of social media, my news feed saturated by negative headlines and hateful rhetoric. It makes me lose faith in our country and often makes me feel powerless.



But I have learned that to give up my power is to let myself be controlled by the negative forces in this world. Working with Project Feast, and the organizations we partner with, I am reminded everyday that out of sight of the headlines there are innovative ideas taking root, and amazing people working together to create change.

What I love about Project Feast is that our Culinary Apprenticeship Program build on the existing strengths that immigrants and refugees possess, and amplify those strengths to innovate solutions. It became clear to me right away that the women that we work with and their

incredible talents are heart of our organization.

Everyday at the Ubuntu Street Café we sit down for a family meal with the team of staff and apprentices. I also stay in touch with Project Feast alumni and often contact them with requests regarding outreach. I am consistently humbled by the strength and tenacity of the people with whom we work, despite the immense challenge of navigating a new country, while often dealing with past traumas. After thanking a Project Feast alumna for helping on some promotional material, her response hit the core of what I believe is the spirit of this organization, *“It's simple thing to do for Project Feast for helping and supporting us all the time. We are like one big family and that's what family do for each other.”*

“Working with Project Feast and the organizations we partner with, I am reminded everyday that out of sight of the headlines there are innovative ideas taking root, and amazing people working together to create change.”

Regardless of where we are from, what religion we practice, the color of our skin, the language we speak, we support each other to be the best that we can be. This is not a simple or a small thing: it is immense and hugely powerful. This to me embodies the spirit of Ubuntu. Working at Project Feast reminds me of this everyday, and makes me feel hopeful and proud to be a part of this community. We greatly appreciate your support and your contribution to a working solution.

P.S. The food is amazing.

Molly Payne, *Program Coordinator*



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Hello world!

As a new member to the Project Feast team, I can say that this community impacted my life faster than I could have ever imagined. Every day I learn something new about food and cross-cultural communication.

After graduating from school, I thought I would travel internationally for a few months. But I am glad that life took a different turn. I have learned more from “traveling” through food, meeting new friends, and participating in meaningful discussions with the Project Feast community. In this community, I feel grounded with the strength, perseverance, and desire to spread kindness and respect.

Recently we held a meeting for Project Feast’s strategic plan. We started by stating what we wanted to see in the world in the next five years. So, I began reflecting and creating a list.

In five years, I want to see...more love and less hate, more acceptance and less tolerance, more conversations and less screens, more empowerment and less barriers, more doors and less walls, more we and less I, more global citizens and less divisions, more integrity and less deception, and, more equity and less poverty.

We need to see one another as human beings before labels and stereotypes. We need to respect one another. We need to create stronger communities. I realized that Project Feast has already started creating these ripples of change in today’s world. I am lucky to be a part of that and hope that you will be too.

Thank you,
Lauren McParland
Development Coordinator



After searching for a picture, I realized that I am often behind the camera at our events! But that’s me at May’s Migrating Meal, Filipino Fusion, one of my favorite programs we do!