

## **Celebrating Diversity: Cultures of the World Potluck**

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Celebrating diversity in the workplace can sometimes be complicated. If one group is celebrated and one is not, that can cause feelings of being excluded and devalued. However, the University of Arizona Maricopa County Cooperative Extension (Phoenix, Arizona) has found a way to include everyone in an office of 60+ employees that offers a level of involvement that can suit everyone's comfort level. We call this the "Cultures of the World Potluck".



This potluck luncheon is an annual invitation to everyone in the office to participate by bringing a dish from their culture—this could be something from their family culture, their racial or ethnic culture, their religious culture, or the culture of a distant family ancestor—and they are also invited, if they are inclined to do so, to put a place card next to their dish with a brief history of it. Additionally, tables are placed in pods with conversational prompts regarding ancestry and culture, so that during the luncheon, those on the planning committee sitting at the table grouping can ask the questions out loud, and participants at the table can voluntarily answer the questions. This always sparks great conversation. We have found that a sense of pride grows within participants as everyone is able to share as freely as they feel comfortable, in an atmosphere of openness and kindness to foster growth and learning.

The committee that works on this celebratory event never anticipated all the positivity that has come from the celebration of diversity. The Cultures of the World Potluck is one event that is looked forward to with anticipation each year.