



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL

Guidance on Dietary Requirements for Friendship Force Hosts and Ambassadors

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to clubs on what to do if an ambassador joining one of your Journeys has a specific dietary requirement or you are hosting an ambassador with dietary requirements.

Dietary requirements might refer to one of the following:

- **Dietary Restrictions:** e.g. vegetarian, vegan, or gluten intolerant.
- **Food Allergies:** e.g. peanut allergy, wheat allergy, shellfish allergy, etc. It is important that if you have a food allergy you inform your Journey Coordinator prior to traveling.
- **Religious Restrictions:** e.g. no alcohol or pork used in meals.
- **Health Conditions and Digestive Disorders:** e.g. Celiac disease, diabetic. These are diets followed for medical reasons.

Guidance For Hosts:

- You will be given the names and contact details of your guests prior to the Journey. Please make contact to find out about your guest's dietary requirements so that you can prepare for their stay.
- Your guests should expect to share your lifestyle, so if they do have specific requirements, ask them to join you in the kitchen to prepare meals.
- There are plenty of delicious meals that can be prepared for special diets as well as modifications to popular meat dishes. There are thousands of recipes on the internet for every type of special diet.
- If you find your guest's dietary requirements are too difficult to accommodate, or you are confused about what they can and cannot eat, offer to take them to a store, market, or supermarket to buy their own food that they can then prepare.

Treat it as a learning experience.

- Whether you are an ambassador or host, please be aware of some traveler's needs to keep kosher or observe halal requirements, and communicate openly about these often strictly observed preferences before shopping for or preparing meals.
- Try not to be offended if your guest cannot eat the food you have prepared. Chances are they feel bad that they cannot accept your hospitality.
- Remember that Friendship Force Journeys are a unique opportunity to learn about other cultures, customs, and traditions and for them to learn about yours!

Guidance For Ambassadors with Dietary Requirements:

- Make contact with your host prior to the Journey and provide them with details of your dietary requirements.
- Find out from your host if specific foods you need are available in their local supermarkets. Consider taking some ingredient substitutes with you if you think that they won't be available in the country you are visiting, e.g. take sugar substitutes with you if you are on a low-sugar diet and don't think you can find these substitutes at the location of your hosting.
- Do some research about typical meals in the country you are visiting so that you know what common ingredients are. For example, dashi stock used in many Japanese dishes is commonly made from fish. If you have a seafood allergy or restriction, this information will be helpful for you.
- Download and print a multilingual food card, [such as this one](#), to take with you when eating out. Multilingual food cards are available for a range of dietary requirements.
- If you need to take medication for a health condition or dietary disorder don't assume the same medication will be easily available in the host country. Take enough with you to last for the full Journey or check with your host if that medication is readily available.
- Remember that you are living in your host's private home and you should respect their hospitality even if it is very different from what you are used to.

- Offer to join your host in the kitchen to help prepare your meal, and use this as an opportunity to teach your host different recipes they might not know.
- If you have a specific requirement that may put extra strain on your host, offer to buy and prepare your own food.
- Make an effort to learn about the different cultures, customs, and traditions of your host. Don't automatically expect them to go out of their way to adjust to your lifestyle or routine.

FAQ:

I'm on a restrictive diet and I am unsure if my host can provide the food I need and I will go hungry. Should I still join the Journey?

Try to communicate with your host prior to the Journey. If they speak a different language contact the Journey Coordinator or the RSM for the region, they will be able to help you explain your needs to your host. As an additional measure, you might like to take some non-perishable food with you such as muesli/granola bars.

My guest is a vegetarian, can I just pick the meat out of their meal before I serve it to them?

Generally, no. If your guest is a vegetarian for religious reasons this will not sit well with them. If it is for health reasons this may wreak havoc on their digestive system. As always, it is best to communicate openly with your guest about what you plan to serve.

My guests only informed me of their dietary restrictions after they arrived, and I don't have any special food for them, what do I do?

Often people on restrictive diets don't require special food and can usually find something they can eat. If they do have particular needs, take them to a store/supermarket where they can buy their own food. This is why communication before the Journey is vital.

I told my host I had a certain dietary requirement and they bought a lot of special food for me, but I am no longer on that diet. What do I do?

A Journey is not the time to try out a new weight-loss or fad diet. It is important that you are honest with your host about what your dietary requirements are. If your host has bought special food to cater to a diet that you are no longer on, you should consider reimbursing them for the cost of the food.

I'm afraid that I won't like the food my host serves. Should I tell them I have a dietary restriction?

Probably not. Part of the unique experience of a Friendship Force Journey is trying new things and learning about how the locals live. This includes taking part in their meals. Being open-minded and inquisitive is an important part of being an ambassador.