

## How to Be a Good Neighbor During an Unpredictable Time

My neighbors are self-quarantining after returning from a trip abroad. Here's how I'm planning to help.  
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When my partner and I moved into a new house a few years ago, we hoped to become friends with our upstairs neighbors. We knew we'd have to navigate tricky situations—whether to patch the leaky roof or replace it, how to divvy up the shoveling and raking duties—and counted on it being easier to reach an agreement if everyone liked each other. Fortunately, the couple on the second floor have exceeded our expectations. We carry in each other's packages. We take turns checking on each other's cats. They bring down the extra veggies in their CSA and we bring up extra food that we cook.

Now we're facing an unexpected tricky situation: They are returning from Spain tomorrow and have to self-quarantine for 14 days. So many people find themselves in this position right now: They're returning from vacations, hunkering down to protect their health or the health of their loved ones, or simply trying to practice social distancing. We're lucky enough to find ourselves in the last category—taking things very seriously, but able and willing to pitch in for friends in need.

Here are the ways that we're planning to help our neighbors. No two groups will want or need the exact same thing, but I hope this list sparks an idea that will benefit you and your community.

## 1. Stash homemade broth in the freezer and leave soup in the fridge

These times call for comforting, nourishing soups or stews. You need to have a good broth. I'll tuck into my supply of this **vegetable broth base** (it's so much better than most store-bought broths!) and leave some in their freezer.

Everyone has to decide for themselves what food they're comfortable sharing with and receiving from friends, especially right now. Because I've given my already-clean kitchen a deep cleaning and always follow **our company's food-safety standards** at home, I'm happy to cook for our neighbors if they are willing to accept it. I'll start with this **Soupe au Pistou**. Our local supermarket still has all of the necessary produce and we always have canned beans on hand. We'll swap out the Parm in the homemade pesto for walnuts since one of our neighbors prefers to eat vegan.

One tip: If you're making a similar soup to gift to someone, put the dry pasta in a baggie and tell them to add it when they reheat the soup. That will keep the pasta from overcooking and soaking up all of the liquid.

## 2. Cook extra of whatever we make ourselves

Since we generally cook for two, we often halve recipes so we don't have too many leftovers. For the next few weeks, we'll make full batches and pack up a portion of it to share. It's a great opportunity for us to make recipes that often don't seem feasible for small households: a pan of **lasagna**, a pot of **Indian-style curry**, and a big batch of **enchiladas**.

### 3. Bake bread that's designed to be shared

Rather than making one loaf, recipes for "friendship bread" yield two: one for the cook, one to give away. The recipient is generally someone who's ill or expecting a child, or otherwise needs a little boost. When better to do that than now? This sweet, tender **Amish Cinnamon Bread** from Cook's Country both smells and tastes incredibly comforting. It will make great toast all week long.

### 4. Make food that tastes like home

When we were making latkes at Hanukkah, one of our neighbors texted us and said that the smell reminded her of the holidays with her childhood best friend. (Our building is small! When we cook, they know it.) It's totally nontraditional to make them in April, but I think it's a great idea. Firstly, it's a shame that such a delicious food is only made eight nights a year. Secondly, the two main ingredients—potatoes and onions—are pantry staples that we stocked up on a few weeks ago. I'll make these **Crispy Potato Latkes** and use up the tail end of the **Simple Applesauce** I made a few weeks ago. If you know a food that's nostalgic for your quarantined friends, they might find it comforting to be given some.

### 5. Offer to make grocery store runs

We should all be minimizing our time running errands, but some people don't have the option at all. So if you're going out for provisions, make sure to offer to pick up some staples for neighbors you might know are unable to go out.

### 6. Restock their pet food and help the pets run out some energy

Pets need comfort, too! (And looking after them also reassures their owners in a stressful situation beyond their control.) Lincoln and Mo, their two sweet but elusive black cats, are getting a fresh supply of food. They'll be dining on Friskie's Chicken Dinner and Turkey in Savory Gravy. You can't take a cat to a dog park (alas!), so we'll do the next best thing: playing with ribbon dancers and a laser pointer. The idea is that our friends will come home to sweet, docile lap cats who just want to cuddle.

### 7. Challenge them to a Scrabble battle

We're all competitive people who usually burn off energy on our bikes or in the gym. That's tough to do right now so we'll pivot to mental exercise instead. To keep their spirits up—and if they feel comfortable being in such close quarters with us—we'll be organizing a multi-night Scrabble and Scattergories battle royale. Of course, if we decide it's best to keep our distance from each other, we'll opt for digital games like Words with Friends and compete to complete the nightly New York Times crossword puzzles fastest.

[https://www.americastestkitchen.com/articles/2243-how-to-be-a-good-neighbor-during-an-unpredictable-time?extcode=NSAKC16FB&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=photo&utm\\_content=neighbors&utm\\_campaign=atkfacebook](https://www.americastestkitchen.com/articles/2243-how-to-be-a-good-neighbor-during-an-unpredictable-time?extcode=NSAKC16FB&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=photo&utm_content=neighbors&utm_campaign=atkfacebook) retrieved 03-17-20