

How to Prevent Missing Kitchen Equipment

We recently were asked a great question about how to keep track of equipment in a community kitchen. Lots do grow on community kitchen equipment – it's hard to prevent. We asked our network of community kitchen leaders for some ideas. Here is a compilation of our ideas as well as the tips and comments we received.

Thanks to Lynn Leong from South Burnaby Neighbourhood House, Vera Doell from Interior Community Services (now retired!), Candy Zazulak from ACCESS – Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society, Leo Ramirez of DECK-Downtown Eastside Community Kitchens) and to Christine Hall of Tingha Regeneration Inc in Australia for their responses.

Lower the incidence of missing equipment by checking it regularly and letting your groups know you are doing the checking regularly.

Keep an inventory of what is in each cupboard & drawer.

- How much detail you want to include in the inventory is up to you. Some keep track of the number of each item (e.g. number of forks, spoons etc.). To make this inventory effective, you will need someone to regularly compare what's listed in the inventory with what is actually in the kitchen. Once a month would be fine or every 2 weeks if the kitchen is used a lot.

Lock expensive equipment in cupboards.

Keep some items in your office or keep them with you rather than storing them in the kitchen.

- At the Greater Vancouver Food Bank, we have a knife case which holds 7 paring knives and 7 chef knives which stays in our office until we run a workshop. We do not let our workshop knives mix in with 'regular population' knives which are used daily. We haven't had to replace a knife in years and our knives are in great shape and stay very sharp. Good knives are very expensive and we consider a good knife to be key in cooking so we separate them out.
- *We had an office where I stored all equipment and only brought with me to the group what was needed that day and brought it all back to the kitchen. It is a load to carry but at least you get to bring it all back this way.*
- *Usually the building manager is the one who have the key to open the room where we store our kitchen equipment. I have a knife case that I take with me to our CKs so I do not have problems losing knives. I also carry one cutting board and a frying pan that we use most of the time.*

Engrave your name on the equipment.

- It's permanent and cheap! In Vancouver, our local community policing offices have engravers that they lend out.

Mark everything with nail polish in a bright color.

Having the participants purchase the equipment.

- *What I had decided to do was maybe buy some extra equipment and have it available to the participants at a discount price or give them a list of what they need in their home kitchen and where is a great place to buy it.*