



Food For Thought
healing with food+love

THE DISH

SUMMER 2026

WE SERVE
**SONOMA
COUNTY**



Many Hands, Many Hearts

Dear friends and community,

Food For Thought has held a special place in my life for nearly 15 years now, and I'm excited to share a little bit about my journey from high school volunteer to Board President.

I first learned about FFT as a sophomore in Interact Club at El Molino High School. As I helped at food drives and fundraising events, I quickly fell in love with the mission and the people of the organization—the clients, staff, and volunteers. There is something so powerful and intimate about helping others heal with food and compassion.

I decided to do my high school senior project with FFT, volunteering at the food bank every Saturday, taking orders, packing up groceries, breaking down bulk items, and creating friendships with clients and volunteers. The thesis of my project was to explore the stigma around HIV/AIDS, and the consequences that society's fear and ignorance played throughout the AIDS epidemic of the 80s.

Once I learned about the impact of the disease here in Sonoma County, I could not wrap my head around why, in all my years of schooling, I had never been encouraged to get tested for HIV—let alone, taught how it was transmitted. It inspired me to educate my classmates about the history of our community and highlight the danger of stereotypes and apathy when our own neighbors are in need.

After graduating from Sonoma State and starting my job at Sonoma Clean Power (SCP), I looked for opportunities to bring my two worlds together. A few years ago, SCP was able to support FFT in purchasing an all-electric delivery van, and our team continues to volunteer for food drives and in the garden multiple times a year.

Back in 2020, Elisa Baker, my fellow Board member and the FFT Volunteer Coordinator during my high school years, encouraged me to join the Board of Directors to level up my involvement. Last August, I was elected as Board President after serving 6 years on the Board. It has been an honor to support Food For Thought in a leadership capacity.

The work that goes on behind the scenes to operate such a welcoming, caring, and effective organization is not easy. From the exceptional staff and volunteers, to the local farms and generous donors—it takes many hands to give the gift of healing nutrition. I am so grateful for the lessons and relationships this organization has gifted me, and I could not be more proud to support the incredible services of Food For Thought.

The continued support from our community ensures those services will be available to those who need them. If you've never volunteered with us, I hope you consider getting involved. If you have space in your garden, perhaps plant a donation plot. And if your time or growing space is limited, a financial contribution can make an equally meaningful difference in helping us continue our work. However you like to engage, we've got rewarding activities, connections, and opportunities to make an impact waiting for you!



Thank you to every individual, business, and partner who continues to make Food For Thought's mission possible. Your kindness and generosity are why I am still here today.

Claudia Sisomphou
Board President



John Manley's Enduring Legacy

In the late 1980s, when the AIDS epidemic was devastating communities across the country, one man's simple idea would grow into a lasting legacy of compassion. His name was John Manley.

A Guerneville resident and bartender at the Triple R Hotel, Manley was living with AIDS when a neighbor brought groceries to his home. This act of kindness sparked an idea: what if an entire community came together to support people living with HIV/AIDS?

According to Food For Thought co-founder Kari Kemp, Manley approached her with the concept during the River's Cup, a fundraising canoe race benefiting people with AIDS.

"He says to me, 'I have this great idea for a food bank, an AIDS food bank,'" Kemp recalled. "And I've already got a name for it. It's going to be called Food For Thought."

That conversation changed the course of Sonoma County history.

By 1988, when Food For Thought was founded, over 45,000 people had died from AIDS, there was no effective treatment widely available, and Sonoma County had one of the highest rates of AIDS in the country. The epidemic was relentless, causing entire circles of friends to vanish with alarming speed. Kemp and partner Torch Kleinhenz recalled the heartbreak of writing down the names of people who had died.

"One month was 50 people," Kemp said. "I called my mom and my mom said, 'That's not even possible.' It was no exaggeration."

"It was like one day they'd have a cold and the next day they were gone," Kleinhenz said.

The social climate was almost as harsh as the disease itself. Many people living with HIV experienced discrimination from employers, communities, and even family members. Stigmas made it impossible for them to leave their homes, including going to the grocery store.

The extraordinary compassion from neighbors, especially lesbian women, and healthcare workers were an invaluable support for those suffering. Nurses cared for young men whose lives were ending far too soon and whose parents never came to visit them, often becoming the family they no longer had.

Hospice nurse Hrieth Pezzi first encountered Manley while working at Community Hospital in Santa Rosa. The hospital had transformed a whole ward to care for patients with HIV/AIDS.

Against that bleak backdrop, John Manley stood out as a ray of sunshine. To those who knew him personally, Manley was a vibrant presence whose personality left a lasting impression on everyone he met.

Known affectionately as “Miss Thing,” Manley possessed what Pezzi described as a “megawatt personality.” He was handsome, charismatic, endlessly social, and determined to live life fully despite his diagnosis.

“John was a very big deal,” Pezzi recalled. “He was just radiant.”

What impressed her most was that even while battling a terminal illness, Manley was focused on helping others. During his hospital visits, he shared with the hospital staff his idea for an AIDS food bank.

“I was impressed by that,” Pezzi said. “Here you are sick, but you have energy to do this because he was that guy who wanted to help his community.”

Kari Kemp immediately recognized the importance of his idea. Together with Torch, Betsy Van Dyke, Sid Smith, and Thomas Walter, months were spent around a kitchen table developing what would become Sonoma County’s most respected HIV nutrition program.

Food For Thought was more than a food bank—it was a symbol of community care during one of the darkest

chapters in history. It provided a safe space where people living with HIV were not just welcomed but loved.

John Manley passed away on November 27, 1988, before seeing his food bank idea fully come to fruition, yet his whimsical and compassionate spirit continues to live on through Food For Thought. It can be found in every act of kindness that reminds people they are not alone. In a time marked by fear and loss, Manley, Kemp, Kleinhenz, Van Dyke, Smith, and Walter imagined a way for neighbors to care for one another.

“I could walk into Food For Thought right now, and I can tell you that the whole vibe that’s in there—the whole way it’s set up, the volunteers that work, the paid employees—it’s exactly what we envisioned,” Kemp shared. “We have said ‘When AIDS is cured, we’ll go out into the community and take care of the old people, take care of the sick people, take care of the cancer patients.’ And that’s what they’ve done.”

John Manley’s memory is preserved through the AIDS Memorial Quilt, where his panel—adorned with Food For Thought’s original logo—stands among thousands honoring lives cut short by the epidemic.



IN-KIND DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Chokmalichi Farm: Growing Good

On a 10-acre property off Ross Station Road, a farm rooted in a simple idea—do good—is making a big impact. Each week, 95% of its harvest finds its way to the tables of Food For Thought clients.

Rozanne Silverwood named the farm Chokmalichi by weaving together her family’s Chickasaw surname, Gooding, with the language of her Indigenous heritage where *chokma* means “good,” and adding *lichi* makes the noun a verb. Doing Good is both a name and a guiding principle.

Rozanne and her husband Mark arrived in Sonoma County six years ago, in the early days of the pandemic. “When everyone started baking bread, we started growing plants,” Rozanne reflects. Mark’s career has been providing affordable housing. Now, he grows flowers: 30-foot rows of zinnias, dahlias, and sunflowers that he tends with care.

What began as six planters of vegetables and flowers has grown into a thriving, thoughtfully designed farm. With leadership from farmer Deb Drew, the “brains” of the operation, the property now balances beauty and ecology through pollinator-friendly gardens, abundant vegetable beds, and an orchard of heirloom Gravenstein

apples and stone fruit. A small vineyard, first harvested last fall, yielded its first bottled wine last month.

A connection through their Forestville-based landscape architects led the Silverwoods to Food For Thought. Their first donation—a box of Little Gem lettuces—arrived in January 2021. Today, they contribute nearly 100 pounds of fresh produce each month. They grow spring plants for us to sell at our Annual Plant Sale, and the bouquets at our annual volunteer appreciation party are all grown at Chokmalichi.

Next season, our partnership will deepen even further. Food For Thought will work directly with Deb and the Silverwoods to identify the produce our clients need most, helping inform the farm’s planting plan and ensuring even more of our staples come from local farms.

What began as a generous donor relationship is growing into a true planting partnership. Together, we’re creating a direct connection between what is grown at Chokmalichi and what Food For Thought clients need most. It’s a model rooted in collaboration, stewardship, and a shared commitment to nourishing our community with fresh, locally grown food.



FOR YOUR KITCHEN

Crispy Sheet Pan Tacos

Recipe by Stephanie Kuo, Operations Director

Ingredients

- 16 oz extra firm tofu, lightly pressed with paper towels
- 2 tbsp taco seasoning
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp cornstarch
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp avocado oil
- 12 corn tortillas
- 2 can refried beans
- 1 lb shredded cheddar cheese
- Neutral cooking oil or oil spray
- Chopped cilantro, for garnish
- Chopped onion, for garnish

Instructions

Using a box grater, grate the block of tofu to create shreds. Add the taco seasoning and olive oil, mixing until the shredded tofu is evenly coated. Sprinkle cornstarch over the tofu and combine well.

Heat the avocado oil in a large skillet over medium high heat until very hot. Add the tofu in a thin layer and cook until golden brown, about 5–7 minutes. Flip the tofu to cook the other side, another 5 minutes. Cook until the tofu looks crispy and is a deep brown. Cool slightly, then transfer the tofu to a cutting board and chop. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Gently heat the tortillas in the microwave for 10–15 seconds. Spread 2 tbsp of refried beans on one half of the tortilla, and 2 tbsp of the tofu on the other half. Sprinkle with shredded cheddar cheese. Fold the tortilla in half to close. Spray or brush both sides of the taco with neutral cooking oil and place on the baking sheet.

Bake for 16 minutes, flipping halfway through, until golden brown and crispy. Serve immediately, garnished with cilantro, onion, and your favorite hot sauce.

Ways to Give

There are many ways to support our mission. Visit our website for all the ways to give.
If you have questions about giving, please contact us at donations@FFTfoodbank.org



Donate Online



Volunteer



More Ways to Give

Food For Thought is a 501(c)3 organization. Our EIN number is 68-0181095

Community Night at Russian River Vineyards

Wednesday, July 29, 2026 • 5:00–7:30 pm
5700 CA-116, Forestville, CA 95436

Enjoy live music, Russian River Vineyards wine, tasty bites, a fantastic raffle, and more!
A portion of proceeds will benefit Food For Thought.



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