

To Absent Friends

A people's festival of storytelling and remembrance



Guide to holding a To Absent Friends Supper



#ToAbsentFriends



To Absent Friends Suppers: A Guide

The Absent Friends Supper is a contemporary take on a timeless concept - getting together over food to remember people who have died. Suppers can be formal or informal, public or private, dedicated to one person, or held in memory of many.

If you are thinking of hosting your own supper, here are some questions you might want to consider.



Who will be remembered?

It is good to be clear about who the Absent Friends Supper is for. Will you dedicate the supper to someone in particular? Or do you want to dedicate the supper to a group of people collectively, for example grandparents, or people who have died in the last year? Another option is to dedicate a supper to the collective memory of those who are gone - leaving space for guests to choose who they want to remember.

Who will you invite?

Suppers can be held with family, friends, work colleagues, community groups or more formally, for people who don't know each other. Who do you want to come to your supper? What group will work well together? Who do you think would like to come?

What is for supper?

You might want to choose a menu that is in some way significant to the people being remembered - their favourite food, or something they used to cook.

People might want to bring contributions to the meal, associated with their own memories.

Alternatively, you might prefer to provide food that is unconnected to the people being remembered.



How will you put your guests at ease?

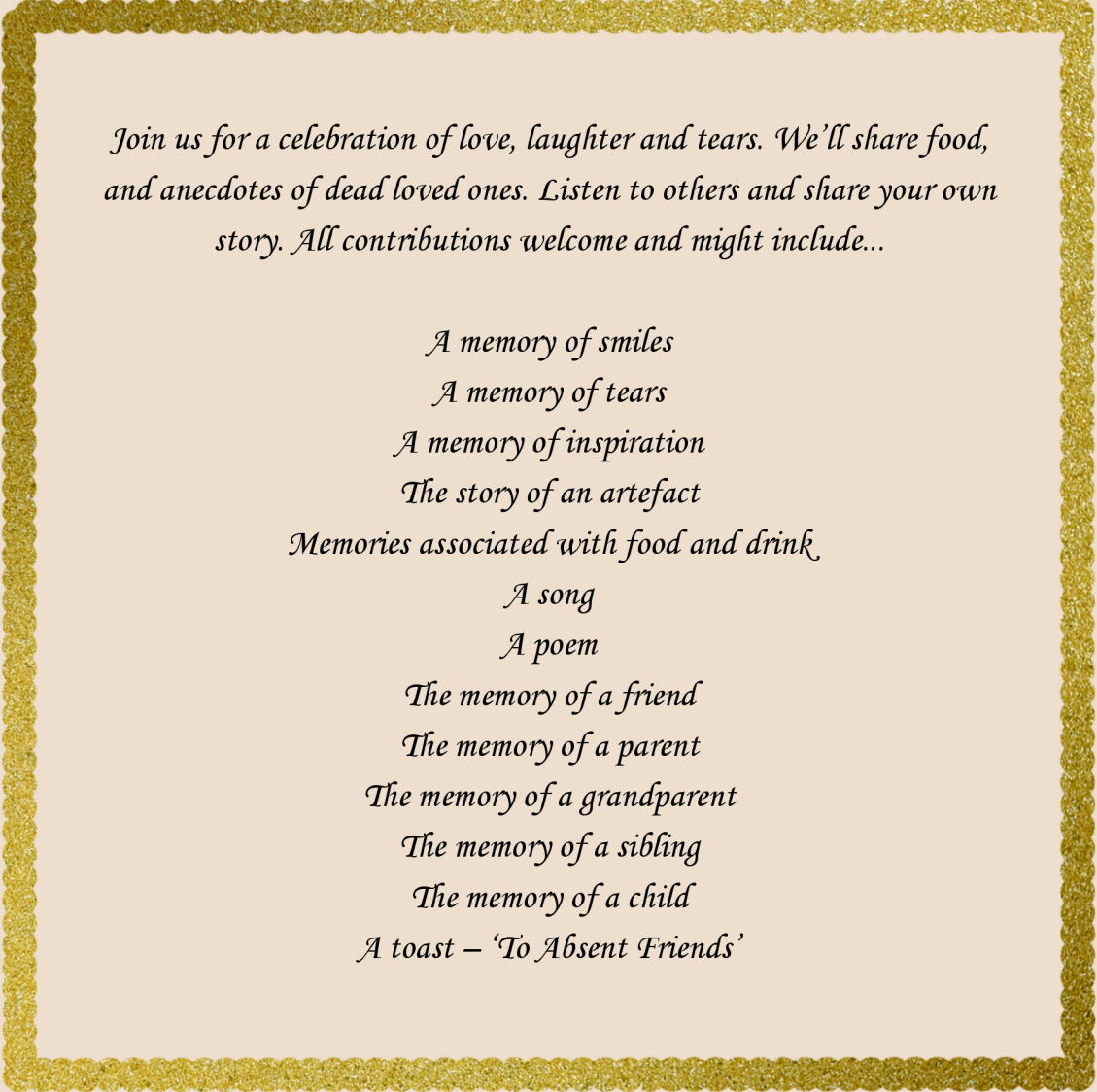


Each Supper is unique - created by host and guests - an opportunity to revive old traditions and create new ones. You can be as formal or informal as you like, and it is a good idea to think about the group dynamic of your guests when deciding your format.

Will the people find it easy to chat, or do you need some kind of focus to help break the ice? Will everyone want to contribute, or will some people prefer to listen? How will you make sure that no-one feels awkward or under pressure?

Photo albums can be a good way of starting conversations. You can also invite people to prepare in advance – ask people to bring a song, a poem, or a humorous tribute – and work out a pre-planned programme to help avoid awkward silences.

Here is one potential way of phrasing invitations, which gives people an idea of what to expect, and how they might contribute. The following text was used for an Absent Friends Supper in the Scottish Parliament in November 2015. This is a fairly formal invitation, but provides some ideas of the kind of contributions that can be invited.



Join us for a celebration of love, laughter and tears. We'll share food, and anecdotes of dead loved ones. Listen to others and share your own story. All contributions welcome and might include...

*A memory of smiles
A memory of tears
A memory of inspiration
The story of an artefact
Memories associated with food and drink
A song
A poem
The memory of a friend
The memory of a parent
The memory of a grandparent
The memory of a sibling
The memory of a child
A toast – 'To Absent Friends'*

If you are planning to hold a supper as part of To Absent Friends, please consider sharing your experiences with us – email samara@palliativecarescotland.org.uk

More information is available at www.toabsentfriends.org.uk



to absent friends ...

To Absent Friends is an initiative of the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care. It is part of our Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief work to make Scotland a place where everyone can help when someone is caring, dying or grieving.

www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk

www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk

www.toabsentfriends.org.uk



Photos by Fraser Cameron

