Notes  This recipe can be used in groups with varying degrees of mental and physical capacity. I have used it in dementia care facilities as well as with active older adults who are gathering memories as performance and art-making material.

From the kitchen of: Lois Weaver

Serves: 0-12

Ingredients

1  2 trays of Kinetic Sand (Kinetic Sand adds a valuable sensory experience but is expensive so regular sand will also do)

2  12-15 dollhouse-sized objects (pots, books, telephones, sewing machines, cars, sports equipment etc.)

Directions

1  Prepare the sand trays. Make sure your trays are large enough so that participants feel free to manipulate the sand without worrying about the mess. Also make sure the sides of the tray are not too high as this can make it difficult for some to reach over and into the sand. Tray 1 is only sand. In Tray 2, bury the small objects throughout. If you have the budget for the sand, you may want to add a 3rd tray so that the objects are buried further apart.

2  Invite the participants to sit around the table. If that is not possible, you can use a trolley, rolling lunch table or hold the tray for the participants. It's best if they have both hands free for the task.
Pass Tray 1 (that contains only sand) around the table and invite participants to ‘dig’ in the sand. Prompt them to talk informally about the sensual nature of the experience and to describe any memories associated with the experience. They can also describe any resistance they may have to ‘getting their hands dirty’.

Pass Tray 2 that contains the buried objects and invite them to dig for treasures. Once they have located an object, interview them with questions such as: What is this? Have you had one of these in your life at any point? If so when and where? What does this remind you of? Encourage others to also ask questions or add their own associations.

Let them hold the object as the tray is passed around to others. When everyone has an object, use it as a prompt/inspiration for more storytelling. These can be used for short object video portraits that begin with the phrase ‘This is my...’; a piece of writing that begins with listing the physical characteristics of an object that the found object evoked, or the basis for a still life photo or drawing.
On the Street Where We Live

Notes  This use of a paper tablecloth as a drawing surface is a method that inspires participants to draw outside the lines and can be used as a basis for other recipes.

From the kitchen of: Lois Weaver

Serves: Tables full of people

Ingredients

1. Tablecloths made of paper that, as closely as possible, resemble real cloth table coverings
2. A simple stencil of a two-storey house
3. Colored markers
4. Dollhouse wall paper and brick patterns (printed from web)
5. Glue
6. Scissors
7. Stickers of furniture, plants and animals
8. A microphone or toy loud hailer

Directions

1. Prepare the tables by covering them with the paper tablecloths and lay out the art supplies.
2. Invite participants to sit at the table.
3. Engage in a brief informal conversation about the street where you live or used to live.
4. Hand out the stencils and encourage them to use the stencil to draw a house directly onto the tablecloth.

continues over
5 Color it in. Add doors, windows, wallpaper and or siding etc.
6 Encourage storytelling about houses and homes at each point.
7 Once the house has some character invite them to draw themselves in the window.
8 Then ask them to tell the story of what they can see from the window.
9 Interview them to prompt some detail in the story.
10 Encourage them to draw their garden or yard. As they do get them to talk about what’s in the garden.
11 Ask if they have ever found anything ‘unexpected’ in the garden. If so, stop the drawing process while someone tells their story of the unexpected.
12 Suggest that the tablecloth is a map of your neighborhood and that you are going to conduct a house and garden tour. Invite some volunteers to use the microphone or loud hailer and act as tour guides around the neighbourhood. (Note: If there is time you can do this step at the end of the session. If not, set the tables up with the tablecloths and do this at the beginning of the next session.)
13 Invite the participants to sit around the table. If that is not possible, you can use a trolley, rolling lunch table or hold the tray for the participants. It’s best if they have both hands free for the task.
Post-it Constellation

Notes  This exercise collects snippets of autobiographical information, initially in a chronological way, but then in other groupings.

From the kitchen of: Sue Mayo

Serves: 8-20 people

Ingredients
1  Square Post-its, ideally in two colours.
2  Good clear pens (not biros).
3  An expanse of clear wall.

Directions
1  Ask people to think about 3 significant dates in their lifetimes, (the year is enough). Give them three Post-its and a pen.

2  On each Post-it, write the date and then give three details of the event or story associated with the date on that Post-it. They should be written with the year at the top, and the story below, including the name of the person. For example:

   1975

   Jen left home
to go to College in
Glasgow

3  Once everyone is done, start sticking the Post-its up on the wall horizontally and chronologically, stacking stories from the same year vertically.

continues over
Once these are all done, use the second colour of Post-its to add national and international events that might have happened on or close to those dates.

It’s interesting to look at these and see how the big events match with the life events of the group.

Depending on the age range of the group, you may find you have very different life events, (a birth and a death for example) in the same year.
Who is in the Room?

Notes  This game helps people to reveal different aspects of themselves, different stories, so that they get a feeling of being connected to some people in one way and to others in another way. This version is best for physically mobile participants, but it is possible to adapt it for a seated group.

From the kitchen of: Sue Mayo

Serves: Up to 16 people

Ingredients: No equipment, just space, and some chairs ready for the interviews.

Directions

1. Get the group to stand in a circle so that everyone can see each other, and ask them who they are.

2. Usually there will be some answers – a group of men and women from ‘x’, people who use this Community Centre, five pensioners and 10 children etc. Make sure you are always included, so that people might say, 14 people from Ramsgate and one from London, for example.

3. Explain that you are looking for other ways to understand the group.

4. Suggest making the circle so it goes from tallest to shortest, around the circle. Once people have found their places there may be some stories about height (like having been very tall when young, or minding being short). Sometimes people are very surprised about where they come in the circle, as it can be easy to imagine how tall you are rather than have a realistic sense, and of course, it’s all contextual!
5 Suggest making the circle by month of birth, January to December around the circle. Sometimes people get talking about star signs, about favourite times of the year, and they make alliances with others born at the same time.

6 Ask the group for a few suggestions, and try some things out. I’m always interested to see what are comfortable and uncomfortable ways of arranging the circle.

7 You might now like to pick up some stories that have been shared, and the group can ask to interview some people about what they shared. For example, I have been in groups when the women wanted to interview the men about what it had been like to be boys, and one in which the group wanted to interview all those who coloured their hair.

8 You will need to judge the level of the questions; sometimes people can feel a bit exposed, or alternatively questions can be too much on the surface. It depends where you use this in a process and how well you and the group know each other.
Cocktails in Care Homes

Notes:  https://cocktails.magicme.co.uk/
       https://magicme.co.uk/

From the kitchen of:  Magic Me

Feeds:  12 – 24 people. Older people who live in a residential care home, the care staff and trained volunteers.

Ingredients
1 Drinks: A mix of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. For example, red and white wine, beer, soft drinks, gin, sherry, rum, whiskey.
2 Decorations: Colourful tablecloths, party poppers, cocktail umbrellas, bunting, fresh flowers.
3 Equipment: Colourful tumblers, cocktail glasses, two jugs (one for alcoholic cocktail, one for non-alcoholic), wine glasses, bright bowls, straws, cocktail shaker.
4 Snacks: variety of crisps, perhaps some biscuits or homemade treats such as cupcakes
5 People: Residents, care staff, volunteers.
6 Ice
7 Music
8 Optional extras: games such as dominos or Jenga, fairy lights, dancing, residents’ family members.

Directions
1 Transform the space
Lay tablecloths, put flowers in vases, scatter party poppers on the tables.
Put bunting up all around the room.

continues over
Put snacks in bowls and distribute between the tables.
Put the music on.
*Be careful when standing on a chair and putting up bunting*

2 Set up the bar
Find a bar area, could be on a table, a trolley or a side board or in the cordoned off kitchen area in the room.
Layout the different types of glasses, put a straw and a cocktail umbrella in each glass.
Put out the different drinks, making sure the beers, soft drinks and white wine are chilling in the fridge.
Put the ice in the ice bucket.
Get the two jugs. Fill one jug with non-alcoholic ingredients – add fruit if you would like. Fill the other jug with the alcoholic ingredients.
The bar is ready to serve.

3 The party starts
Residents arrive with care staff.
Volunteers are welcomed in.
People sit around the different tables.
Two volunteers walk around taking drink orders at the tables.
Guests sit and chat to their table companions.
Some start nibbling on the snacks.
Some get up and dance.
Some people stay in the same seat all night, some move around.

4 “Last drinks at the bar”
“Last orders at the bar” is called. Volunteers say “Goodbye” and “See you next month” to all the residents. Decorations are packed away and washing up is done. All equipment is packed away.
Addressing a Fantasy

Notes: This is like the recipe for a basic sauce. Once you have the ingredients and know how, you can use it as a basis for lots of different dishes.

From the kitchen of: Lois Weaver

Serves: Up to 20

Ingredients
A dressing up box/suitcase with some of the following items: costume jewellery, tiaras, wigs, hats, shawls, scarves, gloves and boas, waist coats, work related costume items such as policing, military, nursing, etc. (These can be inexpensive costume items found in party stores), objects such as magic wands, paint brushes, toy musical instruments, tools, shopping bags etc.

Try to provide items that are both fabulous and mundane, that both inspire fantasy as well as recall work/life identities.

Directions

1. Set the items in the room before participants arrive. This subtly introduces the items as working materials and sparks some interest or curiosity.

2. Ask the participants to think about something they always wanted to do or someone they always wanted to be. Encourage them to be as free and outrageous as they want. This is fantasy, not necessarily real life achievable goals.

3. Go around the circle and ask each person to finish the sentence, ‘I always wanted to …’

continues over
Then draw their attention to the dressing up box or table. Ask them if they see anything that reminds them of these actions or this identity.

Encourage them to pick up something one by one and start to dress their fantasy. The original ideas may alter slightly with their clothing choices and with the availability of appropriate items. Go with that. (Note: depending on the size of the group, it might be good to provide multiples of some popular themes).

Encourage them to make suggestions for each other and help each other ‘dress’.

Once everyone has at least one signature item of clothing, suggest that now they are a character and go around the circle and ask them, ‘If this character had a name different from my own, what would it be?’

Get them to finish this sentence, ‘My name is ________ and I always wanted to ________.’

If they have not done this already, encourage them to pick up an object and/or make a gesture in the manner of this character.

To end set up a performance moment, a photo shoot or short video portrait or a way to spotlight each of them so that they can perform for each other.

Note: Some participants are less willing to forgo their own name or identity for a character. In these cases, just encourage the dressing up as a way to be and feel fabulous.
How to Write

Notes: This recipe can be used for individual writers or adapted for group writing projects

From the kitchen of: Peggy Shaw

Serves: from 1 to 100

Ingredients
pen
paper
iphone notes
computer
crayon
napkin in restaurant
memories
the act of underlining
dictionary definitions

Directions
Make a deadline
Postpone the deadline if you can
Wait till the very last minute possible
In a complete panic write everything possible down that comes out of your head while thinking of the theme
Whatever you think of will have to do with your subject
Be impulsive in your thoughts and censor nothing

continues over
Make sure if you are a writer, don’t ever write grant applications, cause they destroy real poetry
Break all rules of punctuation and grammar
Be a little drunk so you are uninhibited
Be as honest and emotional as possible
Be in a hurry
Add a song that has a good beat
Make the song work in your piece, like study the songwriter
see if there is a connection to your theme
Abandon your theme
Write about colors
Put it in a list
Give it to someone
Ask them to edit it
The Posh Club

Notes:  Serve warm once a week

From the kitchen of:  Duckie

Serves:  100 swanky senior citizens, elegant elders & glamorous golden girls

Ingredients

1. A shabby church hall in the sticks
2. 100 gold chairs, crisp white linen, cake stands and vintage crockery from the flea market
3. A troupe of volunteer waiters in black tie and patent shoes
4. A camp and clubbable hostess with the mostess
5. A soprano, a hula hooper and an Elvis Impersonator
6. A grant from the council
7. A warm welcome

Directions

Find a church hall as far away from the metropolis as possible, preferably surrounded by council estates. Chat up the Vicar. Blag some cash from the local council. Convince some big hearted locals to dress up and help out. Light it like a swanky speakeasy in prohibition times. Press the flesh. Mix the scones with jam and cream and wash them down with a nice cuppa. Crack open the ersatz champagne, bang on the vintage jams and get the joint jumping. Remember the recipe for progressive working class entertainment is 90% wow factor and 10% artistic integrity. Finish before it gets dark.

Repeat weekly for ten years.

Important: Whatever you do, remember, DON’T invite middle class people – they won’t enjoy it, and they have their own gaffs.
Performance (sourdough style) starter culture

Notes: Projects requiring a starter require advance planning and the ability have long-term funding partners in the mix.

From the kitchen of: Entelechy Arts

Serves: 50 people with the possibility feeding up to 3000

Ingredients
About 35 people who have found themselves to be old and lonely and isolated; people who have lost touch with who they are and who they could become and may be feeling depressed and anxious and find it much more difficult to get about. (If this ingredient is difficult to source local suppliers could include GPs, Adult Social Care Teams, Hospital Discharge Teams, friends, family and neighbours)

The public areas of an arts and cultural space that is warm, has chairs with arm rests, accessible toilets and can tolerate mess

A handful of artists who have the capacity to simultaneously know what they are doing and not know what they are doing

Spices: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness, curiosity, imagination

Directions
Mix gently. Add the spices.
Allow to ferment slowly (over two years)
Invisible Lives Malted Loaf

Notes  Do not be disturbed if you find that elements of the starter mix have changed. The ‘old’ people may not now consider themselves to be old. They may no longer feel lonely or isolated. The final shape and taste of the loaf is variable as it is dependent on an equal and symbiotic relationship between the artists and the starter culture mix.

From the kitchen of: Entelechy Arts

Serves: This intoxicating mix has the ability to be served as an individual starter for one or a large-scale street party of 5000+.

Ingredients
1. Two cup-fulls of starter culture mix
   [See Performance (sourdough style) starter culture]
2. The pre-occupations and passions that are coming out of the starter mix
3. An artist
4. Spices: competence, responsibility, competence, responsiveness, trust, risk
5. An idea

Directions
1. Undertake the preparation of this recipe within a body of trust.
2. Before serving to large audiences, test out to small gatherings.