Titanic Dinner at the Library

Whiting Public Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Titanic Dinner at the Library

May 3, 2023

$101-250

$$
Byline

Anthony Borgo, Head of Adult Services, Whiting (Ind.) Public Library

The Titanic Dinner invites guests to select real Titanic passenger tickets from a blind draw. Guests sit with their selected class (1st, 2nd or 3rd), and have dinner while watching a history lesson from a historical impersonator.

At the end of the dinner, patrons discover the fates of their selected passengers and whether or not they were survivors of the sinking.

Advanced Planning

I began planning six months in advance when I hired the speaker portraying Violet Jessop, a stewardess on the Titanic.

The dinner was planned around two months ahead of time. I developed the menu, worked on the concept and created the passenger tickets and background information. I used the website Encyclopedia Titanica to research real passenger biographies and other historical information. I also did my fair share of cooking the day before the event.

Marketing

I promoted the Titanic Dinner during another program in March and the program booked up two days later! I submitted a piece for the local newspaper and made program flyers for social media and in-house that I ended up not publicizing because we reached capacity so quickly.

Budgeting

The cost of the food and supplies was under $100. The fee for the speaker was $400.

This was a free program for patrons.

Day-of-event Activity

On the day of the event, I set up the room and decorated the tables based on the various classes. In the afternoon, I started cooking food that was not prepared in advance. This was very challenging because the stove in the staff break room is over 40 years old and was not functioning properly. As a result, food was not getting prepared as quickly as we thought it would, and we were getting stressed out the closer we were getting to the event.

There were four employees that helped with the event. Two before the dinner started and two during the dinner.

Program Execution

Passenger tickets were placed face down on a table and blindly selected by guests as they arrived. Guests then sat with their selected class for dinner.

- Third class menu: mac and cheese, bottled water, store-bought cookies.
- Second class menu: spaghetti and meatballs, garlic bread, flavored seltzer water, Little Debby snack cakes.
- First class menu: lasagna with Texas garlic toast, sparkling grape juice, homemade chocolate cake.

Everything was made from scratch and cost under $100 including plates, napkins, tablecloths and utensils.

Titanic memorabilia was brought in by a library employee and set out around the room for guests to read.

The program was a success. I limited attendance to 30 individuals, but I could have easily had over 50 participants.

Advice

If you plan on doing a program like this and are going to cook, create a menu that you can prepare the majority of ahead of time. I underestimated how long preparing 30 meals was going to take.

Since Programming Librarian published this article, our readers have tried the program at their own libraries! Here’s what they have to say:

Feedback
This was a wonderful event. We had 24 patrons, 8 per class. Each came in and chose a random envelope that designated their class and name for the evening. The tables were set accordingly and the meals varied from pork loin to a baked potato bar. Everyone had a great time mingling with their companion guests with informational tidbits thrown in along the journey. We had bookmarks made for each guest to take home and they got an emergency whistle on their way out. We also had some giveaway items that we drew randomly. We also had a manifest wall that we revealed at the end of the evening where the patrons could see their fate. I used some of the pre-made materials along with some that I drafted. Thank you for sharing.
— Cathi Masson, Branch Technician, Monroe County Library System, Summerfield-Petersburg Branch, Michigan

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
event_photos.pdf
Document
passenger_summary1.pdf
Document
passenger_summary2.pdf
Document
passenger_summary3.pdf
Document

first_class_survivors.pdf
Document
first_class_victims.pdf
Document
second_class_survivors.pdf
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Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Mar 2, 2023
Teens (13-16)+ | $
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Mysterious Benedict Society Adventure

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)