

Food Runners San Francisco

Source: foodrunners.org

Published: September 27, 2016

About Food Runners

The mission of Food Runners is to help alleviate hunger in San Francisco, to help prevent waste and to help create community. Food Runners is currently delivering over 17 tons of food a week that would otherwise be thrown away. With help from our volunteer coordinator, our paid truck driver and people like you, we can provide enough food for over 20,000 meals every week in San Francisco.



Our Founder, Mary Risley

A pioneering figure in the Bay Area food community, Mary Risley started Tante Marie's Cooking School as a full-time professional school over 35 years ago.

In 1987, she founded Food Runners as a grass roots organization picking up excess food from businesses and delivering it directly to agencies feeding the hungry in San Francisco.

12 years later, she was awarded "Humanitarian of the Year" by the James Beard Foundation for her work with Food Runners. In 2007 she was awarded the Jefferson Award for outstanding volunteerism.

The Food Runners Story

In 1987, Risley with a small group of concerned professionals came up with a simple idea: donate food from those who have too much to those who have too little. She persuaded some colleagues in the food industry to save their excess food, which she and a few friends picked up in their cars and delivered to local shelters and food programs. Today, Food Runners has over 250 active volunteers, and more than 450 restaurants, caterers, grocery stores, farmers' markets and other businesses regularly donate perishable and prepared foods.

Growth and Expansion

For eight years, Risley ran the all-volunteer organization out of her home, fielding phone calls and coordinating pickups and deliveries. To retrieve and distribute more food to San Francisco's needy, the program acquired a volunteer coordinator who arranges for pickups and deliveries and a truck driver who manages extra large donations in the Food Runners truck. And while Food Runners is growing, it remains primarily a program of volunteers, with its original grassroots spirit and simplicity of purpose intact.

A Sense of Community

Food Runners is a community where food donors, volunteers and recipients connect. As Mary explains, "People who like to cook are generous, and they like to see others being fed. The volunteers who pick up and deliver the food have an immediate sense of helping others at the most fundamental level. And the recipients have tangible proof that their fellow San Franciscans really care."
