



GET TO KNOW
Mercy Chefs

Mercy Chefs, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was founded in 2006 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. We exist to provide professionally prepared, restaurant-quality meals to victims, volunteers, and first responders in natural disasters and emergencies, and we partner with like-minded organizations to provide food service in underserved communities across the country and around the globe.

Since our founding, Mercy Chefs has served over 34 million meals. With the help of over 20,000 volunteers, we have responded to more than 230 natural disasters across 33 U.S. states and territories and 42 nations. Our impact has grown significantly since 2020. When COVID-19 exacerbated food insecurity in America, Mercy Chefs launched our Family Grocery Box program, delivering millions of meals while continuing our disaster relief and Community Kitchen efforts.

For every person we feed, we learn of three more who are hungry. As the need continues to grow, Mercy Chefs remains committed to expanding our reach to serve more people. To learn more, please visit mercychefs.com.

Areas of Focus

Disaster Relief & Long-term Recovery

Mercy Chefs responds to natural disasters and emergencies globally at a moment's notice. Our professional chefs prepare high-quality, hot meals on a mass scale for victims, first responders, and volunteers using our mobile kitchens, which are strategically staged across the U.S. In addition to meals, we provide clean water and other basic necessities.

Community Kitchens & Outreach

Mercy Chefs' CoFounder, Ann LeBlanc, inspired the development of our Community Kitchens and Outreach division. She recognized our responsibility to use our resources, volunteers, and skills beyond disaster to serve food-insecure populations nationwide. In 2019, we launched our first permanent Community Kitchen in Portsmouth, VA, setting the stage for a program that has since expanded to Nashville, TN, Richmond, VA, and Tampa, FL, with many more to come.

Food Insecurity Response

Mercy Chefs has delivered millions of meals through grocery box distribution. These boxes—filled with pantry staples, proteins, and spices—have made a profound impact on those we serve. We have expanded this program and continue to find new ways to serve food-insecure communities through job skills training, single-parent cooking classes, and budget-friendly recipe creation.





MEET THE FOUNDER **Chef Gary LeBlanc**

After 35 years in the hotel and restaurant industry, Chef Gary LeBlanc unexpectedly discovered his passion while volunteering in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. From his home in Portsmouth, VA, Chef Gary watched as the hurricane devastated his hometown of New Orleans, LA. He saw familiar faces stranded on overpasses, waiting to be rescued, and news reports showed his daughter's neighborhood completely submerged. At that moment, he knew he had to help.

Chef Gary volunteered with every food service organization he could find to support those displaced by the storm. What he witnessed during this volunteer experience changed the trajectory of his life, compelling him to create a lasting impact in disaster relief. As he describes it:

“—

Every time I see a disaster strike around the globe, it takes me back to Hurricane Katrina, and I know I have to help. Something has to be done, and I'm in a position to do it. So, I do.”



In Cajun culture, food is love. Chef Gary grew up watching his Cajun grandmothers cook for every occasion—and often, for no reason at all. The contrast between his childhood experience and the meals being served to Hurricane Katrina victims was jarring. There was little to no food safety. The focus was on speed, low cost, and mass production.

Months later, after returning to Virginia and still broken by what he had witnessed in New Orleans, Chef Gary felt a deep calling to "just go feed people." All his years in the hospitality industry had led him to this pivotal moment, and he became inspired by the possibility of serving restaurant-quality meals in disaster zones.

With his wife's unwavering support and prayer, Chef Gary turned his passion for feeding others into a disaster and humanitarian relief organization: Mercy Chefs.

Since our founding nearly 20 years ago, Mercy Chefs has served over 30 million meals in disaster zones. We continue to expand globally through permanent kitchens, water projects, and special outreaches.

Chef Gary's entire family is involved in Mercy Chefs, including his wife, Ann LeBlanc, who serves as CoFounder and President. He takes great pride in watching his children develop compassion through service. When he's not working, he enjoys spending time with his five children and seven grandchildren.



Contact Us

Please reach out to mercychefs@hodgespart.com with any questions.

Additional Resources

To learn more about who we are, what we do, and how to get involved, please visit mercychefs.com or follow us on social media (@MercyChefs) for live updates on our deployments and day-to-day activities.



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