



Food Recovery Guidelines

Food Donation Guidelines

Thrive DC recovers perishable and nonperishable food items from restaurants , grocery stores, farmer’s markets, farms and catered events for use in our meal and emergency pantry programs. We are committed to maintaining the highest level of food safety and follow the guidelines set forth by the Washington DC Health Department.

As such, we only accept perishable and prepared food items that have been handled and stored at safe temperatures and chilled prior to donation. We do not accept food that has previously been served to the public (hot bar items, food set on the serving line, etc.) and can only take donated prepared foods from licensed or regulated food service providers (grocers, restaurants, caterers, bakeries, etc). All donations are tax deductible.

RECOVERING FOOD IN RESTAURANTS

Restaurants are good sources of leftover fresh, packaged and prepared foods that can be donated to hunger programs. The guidelines presented in this manual will help operators judge what foods are appropriate to donate and how to prepare them for donation.

In general, donors should examine the overall condition of the items under consideration and discard anything that is possibly unsafe to eat. It is up to the recipient program to decide whether or not to accept food that has passed its code date, but the restaurant should provide some assurance that the items are still wholesome. Expired dry goods and sometimes expired frozen items that have never been thawed can be safe, but meats, dairy products and other refrigerated products that have passed their expiration dates may not be fully safe to donate, even though some programs may accept them under certain conditions.

RESCUING FRESH PRODUCE

Restaurateurs should begin their search for donation items by looking at the food they have in storage, such as fresh produce that will spoil before it can be used. While no one would want to eat anything that is moldy, there are many occasions when perfectly edible fruits and vegetables are thrown out because they have passed the point of restaurant quality or freshness or are discovered to have bruises or to be soft so that the produce cannot be served to customers. There are also times when certain menu items may not sell as well, such as salads during an unexpected spell of cool weather. This may leave the restaurateur with three cases unused lettuce in the cooler, a new shipment coming in the door and no space left to store it. In the past, kitchen staff would likely throw such



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items away, but awareness of food recovery enables this produce to be donated to those who need it most.

When donating produce, restaurateurs should keep refrigerated items cold (41 degrees Fahrenheit or below) at all times and examine the items for any signs of decay, spoilage, mold or odors. Store food products separately to prevent cross contamination and discard any cut items that have not been kept refrigerated.

RESCUING OTHER FRESH AND FROZEN FOODS

Restaurants often have other fresh and frozen items on hand, such as meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products that will spoil or reach their quality expiration dates before they can be consumed. Because these items are potentially hazardous high-protein foods, operators should use care when donating them, even though there are cases when some programs may accept these items after they have expired. When donating these potentially hazardous items, restaurateurs **should never donate** items that have been cooked, cooled and reheated. Keep items frozen or below 41 degrees Fahrenheit at all times and examine the items for signs of decay, spoilage and odors. Also check the expiration dates, keep items in their original packaging and do not open, mark thawed items so they will not be refrozen, discard items that have been thawed and refrozen, and discard any opened packages or partially used products.

GLEANNING PACKAGED FOOD FROM SHELVES

Restaurants also may have surplus canned and dry packaged foods that can be donated to food programs. Operators should check their shelves for items that are reaching or have passed their expiration dates and for products that are no longer used, such as a pasta shape that has been taken off the menu or canned sauces that have been replaced by freshly prepared ones. Flour, sugar, rice and other staples are always welcome; spices and specialty items, such as almonds or flavored coffee, help add variety. When donating canned and dry packaged foods, restaurateurs should examine packaging for tears, holes, dents and broken seals look for signs of infestation and spoilage remove any accumulated dust or debris from the exterior discard any opened packages, spoiled or partially used products.

DONATING PREPARED FOODS

Donating leftover prepared items not only keep the dishes from going to waste, but these foods help add diversity to often staple-based menus. Donations of prepared foods allow the culinary industry to have not only a quantitative but a qualitative impact on the meals served in such



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programs, which can make the difference between feeling full and feeling satisfied. Dishes that can be quick-chilled and/or frozen and then easily readied for serving at the meal site, or that are prepared hot or cold and kept hot or cold for timely consumption, are appropriate for donation.

The key to safe donation of prepared food is the proper management of the food's temperature, handling and storage times. When donating prepared foods, restaurateurs should:

1. Discard any food items that may have been handled by anyone except kitchen staff.
2. Avoid dishes containing potentially hazardous foods that have been heated, chilled and reheated, such as chicken that has been given a second or third life in a stew.
3. **Never add warm leftovers to a container of chilled or frozen food.** Keep donated food products separate to avoid cross contamination.
4. Store prepared dishes in shallow, one-use recyclable aluminum pans or clear-plastic food-grade bags.
5. Package food donations in smaller containers, such as shallow pans, rather than larger ones so that recipients can maintain the food's temperature and prepare only the amounts that will be consumed at one sitting.
6. Label and date all containers so that their contents can be identified and used
7. Refrigerate and/or freeze cold items that will not be immediately consumed-this procedure should not be followed for hot food.
8. **Keep hot** the dishes to be consumed immediately at 140 degrees Fahrenheit or above.
9. Know what time a hot dish was prepared, the temperature, and how long it took to cool to assure that foods are not kept in the danger zone of 41 degrees Fahrenheit to 140 degrees Fahrenheit **for more than four hours.**

FOOD CATEGORIES AND DONATION GUIDELINES

Programs that receive donations of prepared foods should provide restaurateurs with guidelines about what particular foods the agency will accept under what conditions. For example, the technical-assistance manual prepared by the national hunger organization Foodchain for its affiliates suggests food classifications of extreme caution, high caution, moderate caution and low caution and offers guidelines for handling each type.

- **Extreme caution foods:** Protein salads, including potato, chicken, egg and seafood; some gravies, sauces and dressings; shellfish and crustacean. Because of the volatility and precise temperature control required when handling these foods, they are generally considered unacceptable for donation.
- **High-caution foods:** Poultry and poultry products; beef, pork and other red meat; cooked rice or beans; tofu and other soy products; eggs; baked or boiled potatoes; dairy products.



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Food should be prepared before its expiration date and within four hours of consumption if held hot and one day if held cold. Put simply, leftovers must not be held in the temperature danger zone of 41 degrees to 140 degrees Fahrenheit for more than two hours total. Also, when cooling hot foods, they should be cooled to under 41 degrees Fahrenheit within four hours.

- **Moderate caution foods:** Cold cuts (with preservatives), smoked or lightly cured meats, hard cheese, soups. Food should be picked up within three days of its expiration date and within six hours of preparation if hot and within 48 hours if cold. Leftovers should not be left in the temperature danger zone of 41 degrees to 140 degrees Fahrenheit for more than two hours. Also, they should be cooled to under 41 degrees Fahrenheit within four hours, refrigerated for no longer than 48 hours and should show no signs of spoilage.
- **Low-caution foods:** Fresh fruit, vegetables, grains, breads, flour, nuts, beans, pastries. Items should be checked for decay or spoilage. In addition to these guidelines, donors should adhere to any handling directions provided by recipient programs.

FOODS UNSUITABLE FOR DONATION

Certain foods are not suitable for donation because of safety concerns. These foods include:

- Home canned, vacuum-packed or pickled foods.
- Foods in soiled containers.
- Perishable foods past a “use by” date, unless frozen.
- Foods in sharply dented or rusty cans.
- Foods in opened or torn containers exposing the food to potential contamination.
- Unpasteurized milk.
- Foods with an “off” odor.
- Foods that are moldy, have fungus or any microbial contamination
- Foods prepared, cooked, cooled, or reheated at home (except for baked goods).
- Alcohol or foods prepared with alcohol
- Food not prepared in commercial in a commercial, regulated, or licensed kitchen
- Foods that are open, have a broken seal, or show signs of tampering
- Foods that have been held at improper temperatures

WHAT INFORMATION A DONOR WILL NEED TO PROVIDE:

Donors will need to be prepared to provide Thrive DC the following information, either verbally or in writing:

- Source of the food.



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- How the food was kept free from contamination during storage, preparation and transport.
- How, where, and when the food was prepared.
- How the food was kept hot or cold.
- How long the food was kept in the temperature danger zone.
- Common name of a dry food staple, if repacked from the original container.

LIABILITY

All donors are protected from liability under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, passed by congress 1996. This act has allows donors across the nation to support an effective effort in fighting hunger by limiting liability of businesses and nonprofits that donate and distribute food to those in need. US Code, Title 42, Chapter 13A, 1791

A primary priciple of U.S. food law is that foods must be wholesome and fit for consumption, so any food outside of the expiration date but otherwise wholesome (closed packaging, kept refrigerated or frozen, not spoiled or growing mold, properly handled and not cross-contaminated) can be donated in good faith and thus without fear of legal liability

FDA Food Code of 2009 - Chapter 3 – provides guidance on

1. Sources, Specifications, and Original Containers and Records
2. Protection from Contamination after Receiving
3. Destruction of Organisms of Public Health Concern
4. Limitation of Growth of Organisms of Public Health Concern
5. Food Identity, Presentation, And On-premises Labeling
6. Contaminated Food
7. Special Requirements for Highly Susceptible Populations