FOOD RESCUE

Donation Guide — Businesses

Food establishments and food processors often want to donate food to hunger relief organizations (like food banks, food pantries, and meal programs). There are many benefits to donating food:

- Save money on disposal costs and reduce waste.
- Support your community and help the one in eight Washingtonians that struggle with food insecurity.
- Keep edible food out of landfills to reduce greenhouse gas and water quality impacts.
- Possibly receive tax benefits (ask your accountant for details).

How to Donate

Food can be donated if handled correctly, not previously served, and kept at proper temperatures. To donate food to a hunger relief organization follow these simple steps:

1. Review your operation:
   - Identify the type and quantity of excess or unused food you prepare.
   - Ensure you are able to safely recover food for donation by following this guide and working with your regulatory authority.
2. Partner with a local hunger relief organization. Find out what food they accept and plan pick-up or delivery times.
3. Safely package and maintain food at proper temperatures at all times:
   - Confirm safe temperatures and cooling procedures of all hot food.
   - Keep food at proper temperatures (see table on next page).
   - Package in clean, food-grade containers.
   - Label with the common name of the food.
   - Store in a designated area of a refrigerator or freezer while awaiting pick-up or delivery.
4. Transport donated food safely:
   - Transport food in a clean vehicle to prevent contamination.
   - Keep food at proper temperatures and use refrigerated transport when available.
5. Track donated items: Use a donation delivery form or provide this information to the hunger relief agency for their records: food source, quantity, type of foods (such as chicken soup, breads, etc.), and date.

A Guide for Food Establishments and Food Processors

Thank you for working to help feed our community! To help reduce the disposal of edible food and confusion over what can be safely donated, the Washington State Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Ecology have partnered to create consistent and clear guidance for industry.

To the right you will see a step-by-step guide for donating foods to a hunger relief organization. Work with your food safety regulatory authority to ensure donations are wholesome and safe:

Food Establishments

- Regulated under the Washington Retail Food Code, WAC 246-215
- Should contact their Local Health Jurisdiction

Food Processors

- Regulated under Washington Food Processing Act RCW 69.07 and WAC 16-165
- Should contact the WSDA Food Safety Program

Washington State Department of Health

Food Safety Program
360-236-3330

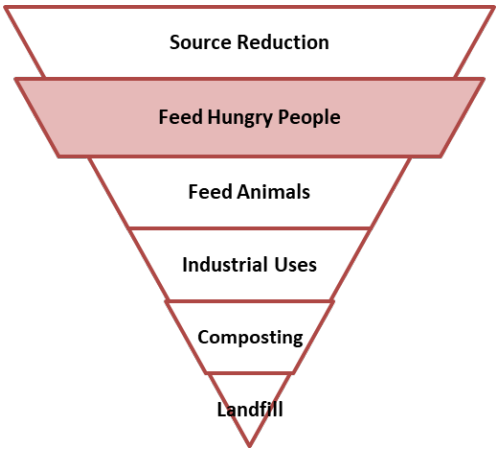
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Department of Ecology State of Washington

DOH 333-241 September 2018

Be Part of the Food Waste Solution!

Food waste is the largest component of our state's municipal solid waste, with edible food making up 8% of overall garbage, as noted in the Washington State Department of Ecology 2015-2016 Waste Characterization Study. The Environmental Protection Agency developed a Food Waste Recovery Hierarchy (modified version below) which lists feeding hungry people as one of the top strategies to prevent and reduce wasted food. By donating edible food from your business, you can be part of the food waste solution and help reduce hunger in your community!



The Good Samaritan Food Donation Act

Chapter 69.80.031 RCW, also called the "Good Samaritan Food Donation Act," offers responsible food donors protection from criminal and civil liability if the donated food is "apparently wholesome." This means the donor knows the food has been handled with correct food safety standards. The act does not release donors or hunger relief agencies from the duty of acting responsibly. Operate with judgment and diligence to make sure donated food is safe and wholesome.

Donated Food Safety for Businesses

When donating perishable food that requires temperature control for safety (also called potentially hazardous food), only donate food that has been kept at proper temperatures. Storing perishable food between 41°F and 135°F can allow bacteria to grow, which may cause people to get sick. Additionally, any food exposed to fire, flooding, temperature extremes, or other distressed food must be approved by your regulatory authority before donation. See below for food safety requirements for various foods.

Table 1. The following foods from food establishments and food processors can be donated if stored in food-grade packaging, not previously served to a consumer, and meet the requirements in the table below:

Food Type	Foods CAN be donated if :	Foods CANNOT be donated if:
Prepared Food (e.g. soup, casseroles)	Properly cooled and stored at 41°F or below, or frozen solid	• Foods stored between 41°F and 135°F • Foods improperly cooled
Chilled Perishable, Prepackaged Food (e.g. dairy, juice)	Stored at 41°F or below, or frozen solid	• Foods stored between 41°F and 135°F • Damaged or bulging packaging
Meat, Poultry, Fish (Fresh or frozen)	Stored at 41°F or below, or frozen solid	• Foods stored between 41°F and 135°F
Fresh Produce (Whole)	Stored in a cool, dry, and clean area	• Significant decay
Fresh Produce (Cut)	Stored at 41°F or below	• Foods stored between 41°F and 135°F • Significant decay
Nonperishable Baked Goods	Stored in a cool, dry, and clean area	• Moldy or stale products
Nonperishable, Prepackaged Food (e.g. canned, boxed)	Stored in a cool, dry, and clean area	• Home-canned foods • Rusty, severely damaged (dents on seams or bulging seals), or leaking cans
Baby Food	Store according to label	• Expired infant formula

Table modified from Appendix A of the Comprehensive Resource for Food Recovery Programs

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