

More than Food: Community Food Toolkit





For more information please contact the Grey Bruce Health Unit
by phone: 519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456 and choose option # 4
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publichealthgreybruce.on.ca

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Introduction

Every food bank is unique in the functions it provides and the people it serves. The Southeast Public Health Community Team has connected with several food banks in Grey and Bruce counties to learn more about the practices and policies related to food safety and nutritious food donations. Through these consultations we have created a set of materials, *More than Food: Community Food Toolkit*, to support the development of positive local food environments.

More than Food: Community Food Toolkit offers tips, tools and public health support for your food bank or community food program. Food banks and community food programs are opportunities to bring people together through our common enjoyment of safe and nutritious foods. This toolkit focuses on building a positive food environment. A positive food environment exists when healthy and safe foods are available for your clients. This can be achieved through understanding safe food handling techniques and best practices related to accepting donated foods. Your program/organization can use this toolkit to expand beyond food distribution to include individual and community development practices and build a positive food environment. Your program has the potential to influence the well-being of an entire community when you take action in improving the nutritional value and safety of foods.



General Principles for Safe Food Handling

The following principles and practices should be followed regardless of the type of food your food bank handles.

Equipment, Utensils and Surfaces:

Materials that come in direct contact with food should be of non-toxic, non-corrosive materials and should be hard and smooth so as to be easily cleaned. Equipment should be installed and maintained for ease of cleaning, and kept in good repair.

Personal Hygiene:

All employees or volunteers that work in direct contact with food (e.g., repackaging) should maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and wear clean outer garments and suitable hair restraint. No person should work in the food bank while ill with a disease communicable through food.

Protecting Food from Contamination:

Food should be protected from physical, chemical, or microbiological contamination at all times. All potentially hazardous foods should be maintained at a safe temperature. Cold foods should be 4°C (40° F) or colder and hot foods should be 60°C (140° F) or hotter.

Labelling:

When repackaging food, it is critical that ingredient lists are placed on the repackaged products because of food allergies or sensitivities.

Salvageable Food:

Foods donated as a result of flood, fire, smoke, etc. are highly hazardous and should not be accepted. It can be very difficult to determine the damage to the food just by looking at it. Contact Public Health if there are any questions or concerns when determining if food is salvageable.

Construction/Maintenance of Physical Facilities:

- safe hot and cold water
- adequate ventilation
- adequate lighting in hand washing areas, toilet rooms, and in areas where food is examined, sorted or stored, and utensils are cleaned.
- floors, walls and ceilings should be cleanable and kept in good repair

Sanitary Facilities:

Food banks should provide adequate toilet facilities for employees and volunteers. Sanitary facilities should contain a hand wash basin with safe hot and cold running water, liquid soap in a dispenser and single service towels or hand air dryers.

Garbage:

All garbage should be kept in leak-proof, non-absorbent containers and should be kept covered with tight fitting lids when stored or not in continuous use.

Vehicles:

Vehicles used to transport food should be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition to protect food from contamination. Keep all foods covered. Use clean containers/packaging for transporting (i.e. boxes for canned food). Make sure appropriate temperatures are maintained. A vehicle that has been used for transporting refuse must not be used to transport food until it has been thoroughly cleaned.

Insect, Rodent and Animal Control:

Effective measures should be taken to prevent rodents, insects, pests and other animals from entering the food bank. If required, consult a licensed pest control operator.

Employee Volunteer Training:

It is very important that employees and volunteers, especially those involved in the critical aspects of the food bank operation, are properly trained in food safety. This would include, for example, making decisions as to which foods are safe for receiving and/or distributing, handling potentially hazardous foods or repackaging of foods. See this link for more information on food safety training

[Food Safety Training Certification](#)

Food Type Category

Four different categories have been established to help food bank operators determine the relative risks associated with the different kinds of foods.

Category 1: Non-perishable Foods

This category includes non-perishable foods (items that do not require refrigeration), for example: pre-packaged foods, canned or bottled products and dry goods such as flour, sugar, pasta, breads and pastries (without cream fillings).

Precautions:

- Sort and identify cans or jars that may not be safe for consumption.
- Bulk packages that require breaking down into smaller quantities or repackaging must be accompanied with adequate labelling.
- Home canned foods, particularly meat, fish, vegetables and combination foods (i.e. antipasto) should **NOT** be accepted due to the risk of botulism poisoning.
- Repackaging of dry goods, like cereal and flour, should take place in a separate designated area of the food bank in order to prevent cross-contamination of finished, ready-to-eat food products. Contact your Public Health Inspector to review and approve this designated area.

Category 2: Low Hazard Perishable Foods

This category includes food such as raw fruit and vegetables.

Precautions:

- Adequate refrigeration facilities should be available for perishable foods.
- It is important that adequate attention be given to garbage containers and frequent removal of garbage. Partially spoiled produce can cause serious odour and fly problems in very little time if not handled promptly.
- It is important that fruits and vegetables that have been sliced or have had their natural coating removed be refrigerated at a temperature of 4°C/40°F or less. Also, unpasteurized juices (not heat-treated) are considered risky food items; they must be boiled to an adequate temperature for sufficient time before drinking.

Category 3: Potentially Hazardous Foods

Includes dairy products, eggs and egg products, tofu products, meat and meat products. These foods may be obtained from a commercial processor, retailer or licensed restaurant, and may involve minor repackaging.

Precautions:

- Potentially hazardous foods must be kept at a temperature less than 4°C (40°F).
- Milk and milk products (including cream and cream products, ice cream, frozen desserts, yogurt and similar foods) must be pasteurized, held at the appropriate temperature [less than 4°C (40°F) or frozen at -18°C (0°F)]. Fluid milk products must be distributed in their original unopened containers.
- Meat and meat products should be held at 4°C (40°F) or colder and frozen foods at -18°C (0°F) or less. Meat that is further repackaged or cut into smaller portions must take place in a separate designated area of the food bank in order to prevent cross-contamination of finished, ready-to-eat food products. Contact your local Public Health Inspector to review and approve this designated area.
- Meat and poultry may only be donated from an approved source, properly packaged, and if there has been no temperature abuse during storage or transportation.
- Packaging materials used for the finished product should be made of a material that will not contaminate the food product.
- Eggs and egg products should be kept refrigerated. Visibly cracked eggs should be discarded. Only graded eggs should be used.



Category 4: High Risk Foods

Food that is processed in an uninspected kitchen, has no labels, received or donated by unknown source(s), produced and handled in an unsafe environment could be contaminated and categorized as High Risk food.

Precaution:

- The food bank should **NOT** receive or distribute high risk food. Food bank managers and administrators must keep in mind that highly vulnerable populations might be accessing food banks and contaminated food may be fatal for people with compromised or underdeveloped immune systems.

Acceptable Safe and Nutritious Food Donations

Food banks, community kitchens, and community gardens often rely on contributions from the community to keep running.

Here are some guidelines to follow when accepting donations.

- Non-perishable food items (canned foods, dry goods) are readily received.
- Foods free of common allergens such as nuts, dairy, egg, or gluten are great options for donations. If foods contain allergens, label and store them separately.
- Cash donations to purchase foods and other non food items that are most needed.

The Ontario *Donation of Food Act* protects food donors, employees, volunteers and food bank operators from legal liabilities against damages resulting from injuries or death caused by consumption of donated or distributing donated food. This protection is not in place if the food was rotten, adulterated or unfit for human consumption and the person intended to harm the recipient of the food or acted in reckless disregard for the safety of others.

For more information for donors and distributors of donated Food in Ontario, [Donation of Food Act, 1994](#)

What is a "Best Before" Date?

It is the amount of time that an unopened food product, when stored under appropriate conditions, will retain its freshness, taste, nutritional value, or any other qualities claimed by the manufacturer.

When the best before date has passed, the food may lose some of its freshness and flavor, or its texture may have changed. Some of its nutritional value, such as vitamin C content, may also be lost. **Remember that "best before" dates are not indicators of food safety, neither before nor after the date.** They apply to unopened products only. Once opened, the shelf life of a food may change. Food past its best before date will need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Do not alter the best before date as provided by the manufacturer.

Never use your nose, eyes or taste buds to judge the safety of food. You cannot tell if a food may cause foodborne illness by its look, smell or taste. Foods that are likely to spoil should be properly stored, and they should be eaten as quickly as possible. Harmful micro-organisms that lead to foodborne illness can grow in foods, even if they do not appear to be spoiled.

And remember ... *"If in doubt, throw it out!"*

What is an “Expiration” Date?

Food should not be eaten if the expiration date has passed. It should be discarded.

Expiration dates are required on the following products:

- formulated liquid diets (a nutritionally complete diet for persons using oral or tube feeding methods)
- foods represented for use in a very low-energy diet (foods sold only by a pharmacist and only with a written order from a physician)
- meal replacements (a formulated food that, by itself, can replace one or more daily meals)
- nutritional supplements (a food sold or represented as a supplement to a diet that may be inadequate in energy and essential nutrients)
- human milk substitutes (infant formula)



Canned Goods

While extremely rare, a toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum* (*C. botulinum*) is a very serious danger in canned goods. Botulism is a deadly food poisoning. The botulism bacteria grow best in anaerobic (absence of oxygen) conditions. Since the canning process forces air out of food, the *C. botulinum* bacteria may find incorrectly or minimally processed canned foods a good place to grow and produce the toxin. Low-acid vegetables such as green beans, corn, beets, and peas, which may have picked up *C. botulinum* spores from the soil, are at risk.

To avoid botulism, carefully examine any canned food that looks suspicious. The risk is greater if containers have been canned at home without following safe canning procedures. Public Health recommends that food banks do not accept home canned goods. Never use food from containers showing possible botulism warnings — leaking, bulging, or badly dented cans; cracked jars or jars with loose or bulging lids; canned food with a foul odor; milky liquids surrounding the vegetables that should be clear; or any container that spurts liquid when you open it. Don't even taste the food!

Carefully throw away canned goods that are suspect. You don't want animals, children, or anyone else who might rummage through the garbage to get ill. Double bag the cans in plastic bags that are tightly closed and place them in a garbage receptacle (non-recyclable).







Eggs

Eggs provide essential nutrients that are part of a healthy diet. But like all foods, they should be produced, handled, and prepared with care to minimize the risk of food poisoning. While eggs are usually clean when laid, they can sometimes be contaminated with *Salmonella* or other bacteria that can cause food poisoning, even if they look clean. Most bacteria, including *Salmonella*, are found on the shell itself. *Salmonella* can also get inside an egg or it can already be inside an egg when it is laid.

Ungraded eggs are not subject to the same food safety standards as graded eggs. For example, ungraded eggs can be unclean, cracked, washed improperly, stored unrefrigerated, or sold in packaging that has not been disinfected. As such, there is a higher chance for them to be contaminated by harmful bacteria such as *Salmonella*. Ask the vendor if you're unsure whether the eggs have been graded. Ungraded eggs are not to be accepted at a food bank.

HEALTHY IDEAS for FOOD DONATIONS

Grain Products 	<p>Include whole grain, high fibre, trans-fat free items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pasta, rice, couscous • hot cereals like oatmeal, corn meal, red river • cold cereals with at least 3 grams of fibre per serving • whole grain bread, bagels, buns & crackers
Vegetables and Fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • canned vegetables, low sodium varieties • canned fruit packed in its own juice or water • fruit juices, 100% juice, unsweetened • tomato sauce or paste • dried fruit (raisins, cranberries, prunes, apricots)
Milk and Alternatives 	<p>Include whole, 2%, 1% or skim milk products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UHT “tetra pack” milk • UHT “tetra pack” Soy beverage, fortified • powdered skim milk • individual milk puddings
Meat and Alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • canned salmon, tuna, ham or chicken • canned soup with split peas or beans • dried beans, peas, lentils, legumes (kidney beans) • peanut butter and other nut butters • baked beans in tomato sauce

ADDITIONAL ITEMS THAT FOOD BANKS OFTEN NEED

<p>Baking supplies (flour, sugar) Margarine Condiments (mustard, ketchup) Seasoning mixes (taco, chili) Jam Coffee/Tea Salad dressings Cooking oils Infant cereals, formula, and baby food</p>	<p>Deodorant Shampoo/conditioner Feminine hygiene products Soap/dish soap/detergent Toilet paper Diapers Toothpaste/toothbrushes</p>
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Nutritious Foods

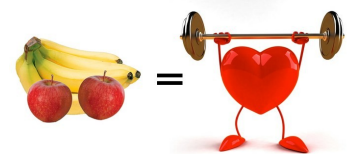
Use these guidelines to choose foods for your programs that will meet your client's nutrition needs. These key nutrition guidelines make for healthy, inexpensive choices.

[Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide](#) is the foundation for healthy food choices in Canada. It translates the science of nutrition and health into a healthy eating pattern. By following Canada's Food Guide, Canadians will be able to meet their nutrient needs and reduce their risk of obesity and chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer and osteoporosis.

[Good Food Box](#) makes purchasing vegetables and fruit easier and more affordable. It is operated by more than 18 local coordinators and 150 volunteers.

[Eat Right Ontario](#) provides articles on food and nutrition, meal planning advice, healthy eating tips and recipes. Eat Right Ontario allows you to ask nutrition-related questions and receive feedback by phone (1-877-510-5102) or email (eatrightontario.ca) from a Registered Dietitian.

- Check out Eat Right Ontario's budget friendly resource [Food Choices When Money is Tight](#)
- The tastes, textures, and variety of foods offered in the first years of life can set children for a lifetime of health. Find out more about starting [solid foods and other age appropriate choices](#).
- Contact Public Health to find out how you can support the [Baby Friendly Initiative](#) at your centre.



Looking for some new recipes to try in your programs or to recommend to clients?

- The Grey Bruce Health Unit Dietitians have posted some of their favourite recipes here: [Resources for Eating Well](#)
- Order a copy of [The Basic Shelf](#) Cookbook by Canadian Public Health Association. Recipes in *The Basic Shelf* can be made from one list of low-cost, nutritious ingredients that make up what we call “the basic shelf”. Most of these ingredients can be kept for a long time in your cupboard without refrigeration.

Tips for Successful Fundraising

From developing plans to saying thank you, here are some tips to help inform your fundraising efforts. Visit the Pod Knowledge Exchange from Community Food Centres Canada for resources including program modules for healthy food banks, drop-in meals, community gardens & kitchens, kids' education programs and more.



[10 Tips for Successful Fundraising](#)

Become a Good Food Organization

A project of [Community Food Centres Canada](#), the Good Food Organizations initiative supports community food security organizations by increasing their capacity to offer healthy and dignified food programs in their communities. By becoming a [Good Food Organization](#), you'll work in alliance with Community Food Centres Canada and organizations across the country based on shared principles that define a commitment to achieving a healthy and fair food system. Membership is free and will provide access to resources, training, and grant streams to support community food security activities.



Changing How We Think About Food Donations

A Community Food Centre (CFC) is a shared space where everyone can gather to grow, cook, share and advocate for good food. While most CFCs have an emergency food distribution program, they often focus on supporting access to high-quality food in a dignified setting. Opportunities for skill development in cooking and gardening are often available for all members of the public, encouraging families and individuals to enjoy new flavours as they help their food grow. Community members develop friendships and support and can use the connections built to form a collective voice on the issues that are important to them. CFCs function beyond the band-aid solutions and work to develop an infrastructure of food security for all.

How can you get started?

- Introduce a healthy food policy within your community food program or food bank.
- Build partnerships with local community gardens or build your own!
- Support your grocery store partners by providing a list of nutritious foods and non food items you'd like donated.
- Build relationships with local producers.
- Speak to local chefs and caterers, invite them to pass on their skills.
- Build capacity to accept or purchase more perishable foods.
- Make your ability to accept perishable foods well known in the community.
- Tap into your client's knowledge and resources for fresh ideas on what foods and activities are needed in your community.
- Connect with other local community food programs/food banks and build on opportunities for partnership.
- Integrate advocacy and civic engagement in interactions with volunteers and clients.

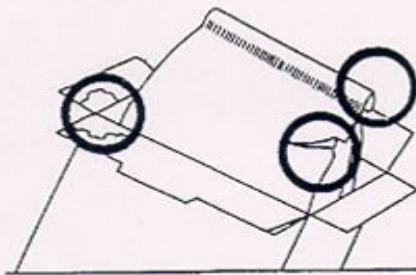
Check out The Stop's [Healthy Food Bank Infographic](#) to learn why others are using policy to provide healthier foods more often.

Guidelines for Evaluating Food Safety of Prepackaged Containers

Courtesy of BC Centre for Disease Control, Food Safety Guidelines for Food Banks, Aug. 2006.

Guidelines for Evaluating Boxed and Dry Packaged Containers

BOXES WITH INNER BAG

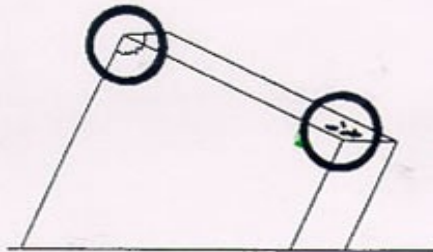


1. Look for contaminants on box
2. Look at inner bag—discard if it is
 - torn, leaking or contaminated
 - has imperfect or leaking seals
 - has moldy or foreign objects inside

TO SAVE GOOD INNER BAGS OF FOOD FROM DAMAGED BOX:

Place inner bag into a plastic and insert label.

BOXES WITHOUT INNER BAG



1. Do not use if opened
2. Look for contaminants on box
3. Look for insects, insect skins, webs, chaff or moving pieces

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!



National Food Bank • 1141 Seymour • The Fisher Building • 343 South Dearborn • Suite 518 • Chicago, IL 60604 • (312) 341-1303

Guidelines for Evaluating Glass Food Containers

Discard Jars With:



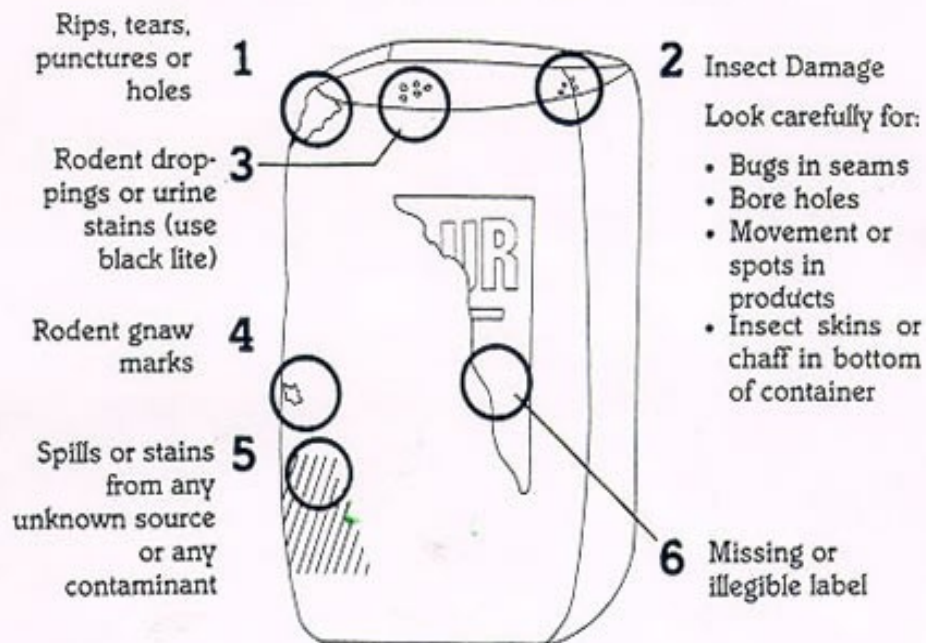
IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!



National Food Bank Network • The Fuller Building • 343 South Dearborn, Suite 505 • Chicago, IL 60604 (312) 341-1303

Guidelines for Evaluating Bagged and Sacked Food Containers

DISCARD BAGS OR SACKS WITH:



IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

Second
Harvest

Kenosha Food Bank Network • The Food Bank Building • 343 South Dearborn • Suite 315 • Kenosha, WI 53140 • 909/413-1211 • 1993

Serious Can Defects



Dented at junction
of side and end



Sharp dent or
dent on seam



Swollen or bulging



Pitted rust or
leaking

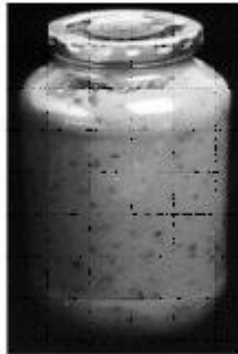
Cans with any of these defects
may be unsafe.

Discard them!



Purdue University
Cooperative Extension Service
School of Consumer & Family Sciences

Serious Jar Defects



Inner seal or tamper resistant tape missing or broken.



Dirt under the rim.



Crooked lid, vacuum button raised, other evidence that cap has been opened.



Leaking, crack or chips, or product discolored.

Jars with any of these defects
may be unsafe.
Discard them!



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Recommended Storage Times

Courtesy of BC Centre for Disease Control, Food Safety Guidelines for Food Banks, Aug. 2006.

People often ask how long a food will keep. There is no absolute answer. Shelf life is dependent on many factors including the initial food type and quality, processing and preparation practices, storage temperature and the number and type of bacteria present both before and after processing. Where possible, follow the manufacturer's recommendation indicated by the "best before" date. Otherwise, you may wish to follow the following guidelines.

Maximum Recommended Storage Time for Refrigerated Food (0°- 4°C or 32°- 40°F)	STORAGE PERIOD (DAYS)
Ground meat	2 - 3
Roasts/steaks	3 - 5
Bacon/wieners	6 - 7
Poultry	2 - 3
Fish/Shellfish	1 - 2
Luncheon meats	3 - 5

Maximum Recommended Storage Time for Frozen Foods (-18°C or 0°F)	STORAGE PERIOD (MONTHS)
Roasts/steaks	3
Bacon/wieners	6
Poultry	3
Giblets	3
Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel)	3
Shellfish	3
Other fish	6
Precooked combination dishes	6

Maximum Recommended Storage Time for Dry Goods (room temperature) Food	STORAGE PERIOD (MONTHS)
Powdered milk	4
Canned goods	12
Cereal grains	8
Spices	24
Dry beans	24
Dried fruit	8
Jams/jellies	12
Nuts	12
Pickles	12
Flour	12

Website Addresses for Publication Links

- **Donation of Food Act,1994:**

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_94d19_e.htm

- **Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide:**

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>

- **Eat Right Ontario:**

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/default.aspx>

- **Food Choices When Money is Tight:**

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Budget/Food-choices-when-money-is-tight---Budget-friendly.aspx>

- **Good Food Box:**

<http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Your-Health/Eating-Well/Community-Nutrition-Programs>

- **Public Health Favourite Recipes:**

<https://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Your-Health/Eating-Well/Resources-for-Eating-Well>

Website Addresses for Publication Links continued

- **The Basic Shelf:**

<http://www.cpha.ca/en/about/digest/xxxv-3/xxxv-3-48.aspx>

- **10 Tips for Successful Fundraising:**

<http://thepod.cfccanada.ca/document/10-tips-successful-fundraising>

- **Good Food Organization:**

<http://goodfoodorganizations.ca/>

- **Community Food Centres Canada:**

<http://cfccanada.ca/>

- **Healthy Food Bank Infographic:**

<http://thepod.cfccanada.ca/sites/thepod.cfccanada.ca/files/Healthy%20Food%20Bank%20Infographic.pdf>

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