



## Public Information

County of Ventura · Resource Management Agency · Environmental Health Division

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# SAFE FOOD DONATION GUIDELINES

These guidelines are for food DONORS and VOLUNTEERS that handle donated foods. For more food safety information, please visit the Ventura County Environmental Health Division website <https://vcrma.org/divisions/environmental-health>

## WHAT CAN YOU DONATE?

You can donate non-perishable food and unprepared/prepared hot or cold foods so long as they are unserved to a customer and maintained at proper temperatures.

### EXAMPLES OF THE TYPES OF FOODS MAY BE DONATED:

- canned food, and shelf stable packaged goods
- raw fruits and vegetables
- cold or frozen uncooked foods of animal origin, such as raw ground beef
- cold fruit and vegetable salads
- hot foods of animal origin, including mixed dishes like lasagna or cooked vegetables
- cold cooked foods of animal origin
- hot or cold grain dishes

Under the California Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (AB1219), you may donate both nonperishable food and perishable food that is fit for human consumption but that has exceeded the labeled shelf life date recommended by the manufacturer (California Health and Safety Code Section 114433).

### EXAMPLES OF THE TYPES OF FOODS NOT TO BE DONATED:

- potentially hazardous foods that are not maintained at proper temperatures
- canned food that is or looks swollen or has a bulge in it or any can that's dented along the seams or has rust along the seams. This may mean that dangerous bacteria are growing inside, or the damage may have allowed bacteria to get inside
- any sealed package that's torn, has a hole in it, or is coming apart at the seams
- frozen foods whose packages show that the food inside may have melted, then frozen again. For example, in cardboard-carton type packages, food stains on the package or other signs that the package has leaked are evidence that this may have happened. Frozen food that is thawed, then frozen again, gives bacteria a chance to grow

## CRITICAL FOOD HANDLING/STORAGE TEMPERATURES

Prepared foods are most susceptible to microbial spoilage between the temperatures of 41°F and 135°F. It is critical that the temperature of the cold food maintains at 41°F or lower for storage and hot holding food maintains at 135°F or higher. Rapidly cool hot prepared food from 135°F to 41°F or below within 6 hours and during this time the decrease in temperature from 135°F to 70°F must occur within two hours. Reheat foods to an internal temperature of at least 165°F or

higher for at least 15 seconds if foods have been out of temperatures for less than two hours. If this temperature is not reached within 2 hours, discard the food items. When in doubt, throw it out.

## **EVALUATING THE CONDITION OF THE FOOD:**

### **PRIOR TO TRANSPORT:**

- package food in appropriate food safe containers, free of contamination.
- cold foods must always remain at 41°F or below
- frozen foods must always remain at 32°F or below
- hot foods must always remain at 135°F or above
- donations of whole produce, canned goods, dry foods and other similar products can be delivered anytime with no requirement for temperature controls or delivery times

### **DURING TRANSPORT:**

- when available, use portable coolers or a refrigerated vehicle to transport foods at 41°F or below
- if refrigerated transport is not available, the food items should be transported in thermal blankets
- if neither refrigerated transport nor thermal blankets are available, food should be labeled “Process Immediately” and must not be out of temperature controls for more than 30 minutes during transportation

### **AFTER TRANSPORT:**

- the food donor must check to ensure proper temperatures at the time of the transfer to the receiving facility or food transporter
- the person-in-charge who accepts the donated food must check that the food is from an approved source (i.e., one that meets food safety standards, such as permitted food facilities), check the temperature of the food upon receipt and note the time that the food is received and that its condition is sound. Examining foods at the time of receipt can be invaluable in intercepting problems that can lead to food contamination, if undetected

## **FOOD WORKERS – BASIC GOOD HYGIENIC PRACTICES**

Handwashing is key to preventing the spread of disease. Good sanitation, hand washing, and minimized barehand contact with raw, ready-to-eat food can help to prevent disease transmission. Food workers must wash their hands and exposed portions of their arms with cleanser and warm water for at least 20 seconds total, with at least 10 to 15 seconds devoted to vigorous rubbing of the hands and arms. Hands and exposed portions of the arms must be washed: immediately before beginning food preparation; during food preparation, as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination and to prevent cross contamination when changing tasks; after using the toilet room; and after engaging in other activities that contaminate the hands. Additional information on when to wash the hands can be found in the California Health and Safety Code Section 113953.3.

Contact **Waste Free VC** for more food donation related questions.  
Email: [WasteFreeVC@ventura.org](mailto:WasteFreeVC@ventura.org) or Telephone: (805) 981-6645