



HARVEST SUPPORT NETWORK

Food Safety

Food safety is one of the biggest concerns for all parties involved in prepared, perishable food donation and rescue operations. The food safety recommendations in this document are based on government and industry standards. For more information on these standards, refer to the food safety standards cited by the USDA (www.usda.gov) and the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (<http://www.nraef.org/>).

Quality Control and Handling

The temperature of food to be donated should be carefully controlled to avoid spoilage and bacterial growth. Foods are most susceptible to microbial spoilage at temperatures between 41° and 140° Fahrenheit (F) [or 5° and 60° Celsius (C)]. Place food to be donated in food safe plastic bags or food safe, sanitized, shallow containers with a product depth of less than 4-inches. The donations should be stored immediately in a refrigerator or freezer. It is critical that the food be “quick-cooled” to a temperature of 41°F (5°C) or lower within four hours. Foods should be reheated to an internal temperature of at least 165°F (74°C) or higher for at least 15 seconds. If this temperature is not reached within two hours, the food should not be used for human consumption. Cooked food must NOT BE HELD at temperatures *between* 41° and 140°F (5° and 60°C).

Shelf Life Standards

This table illustrates the amount of time and temperature at which food donations should be stored before use in a cooler/refrigerator or freezer:

Method	Temperature	Maximum Storage Time
Cooler	35°F – 41°F 1.6°C – 5°C	72 hours
Freezer	0°F (± 10°F) -17.8°C (± 5.5°C)	1 Week

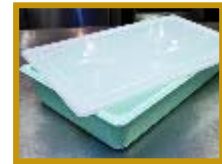
Labeling

All donated surplus food must be stored in food safe plastic bags or food safe containers and labeled. The label should include donor name and location, description of the item, and the date and time the food was packaged and saved. For record-keeping weigh the item and record the weight on the label.



Product Storage at Restaurant or Food Service Establishment

Food that is to be donated should be placed in approved food-safe plastic bags or containers, and labeled with the date and time of storage. This food should then be placed in the walk-in cooler, refrigerator or freezer immediately to avoid spoiling (some agencies would prefer product to be frozen). Product to be donated should be kept at a temperature *at or below* 41°F (5°C) at all times after it is placed into a container. Use approved handling procedures at all times regardless of the amount of food being donated.



Storage & Transportation



The storage and transportation containers and approved food-safe plastic bags provide a system by which product can be saved and transported in a clean and food safe manner.



Food Safety Responsibilities During Food Donation & Rescue Operations

1. Non-profit Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleans & sanitizes any food pans & covers used in storing or transportation of donated food.
2. Food Rescue Program or Non-profit Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returns any food containers used to store surplus food to restaurant.
3. Restaurant or Food Service Establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies surplus food for donation. • Ensures that food is placed in food safe plastic bags or approved containers and labeled with contents and date and time of storage. • Places surplus food in freezer or cooler and ensures food is cooled properly.
4. Food Rescue Program or Non-profit Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picks up surplus food per determined pickup schedule and transports to agency using approved transport carrier (if applicable).
5. Non-profit Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly stores, thaws and reheats product and serves it to the needy under food safe conditions.
6. Cycle repeats - Go to step 1	

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