

Safe Food Handling for Recipients

Quick Reference Guide for Donated Food Safety

1. Inspecting Donated Food

Check Before Accepting:

- **Packaging:** Intact, unopened, no dents/swelling (for canned goods).
- **Temperature:**
 - Cold food $\leq 40^{\circ}\text{F}$ / Hot food $\geq 140^{\circ}\text{F}$ (if applicable).
 - Frozen food should be solid.
- **Expiration:** Avoid items past "use by" or "best by" dates (except non-perishables like dry pasta/rice).
- **Appearance/Smell:** No mold, off-odors, or discoloration.

Do Not Accept If:

- Damaged, leaking, or bloated packaging.
- Perishable food left unrefrigerated > 2 hours (or > 1 hour if above 90°F).

2. Storing Donated Food Safely

Perishables (Dairy, Meat, Produce, Prepared Meals)

- **Refrigerate** ($\leq 40^{\circ}\text{F}$) within 2 hours of receipt.
- **Freeze** ($\leq 0^{\circ}\text{F}$) if not using within 3–4 days.
- **Separate raw meat** from ready-to-eat foods to avoid cross-contamination.

Non-Perishables (Canned/Dry Goods)

- Store in a **cool, dry place** away from sunlight.
- Discard cans with rust, dents, or bulging lids.

Pantry Staples (Bread, Pastries, Dry Goods)

- Keep in airtight containers to prevent pests.
- Consume bakery items within 3–5 days (or freeze for longer storage).

3. Preparing & Consuming Donated Food

Thawing Frozen Food

- **Refrigerator:** Thaw overnight (safest method).
- **Microwave:** Use "defrost" setting and cook immediately.
- **Never thaw** at room temperature!

Reheating Prepared Meals

- Heat to **≥165°F** (use a food thermometer).
- Stir soups/sauces to ensure even heating.

Food Allergies

- Check labels for allergens (e.g., nuts, dairy, gluten).
- When in doubt, **do not consume**.

4. Food Safety Red Flags

Discard Immediately If:

- Unusual odor, texture, or color.
- Perishable food left unrefrigerated too long.
- Signs of pests or tampering.