



Guide for businesses to donate food

Food banks and hunger relief agencies maintain well-defined protocols for ensuring the safe and efficient collection and distribution of donated food.

Here are some steps you as a business owner can take to properly prepare food for donation:

Step 1: Identify items that can be donated

Perishable, non-perishable and prepared foods that have not been served or sold can be donated. Both large and small amounts are welcome.

- Bulk food items -- items that normally come in volumes to be broken down into smaller proportions for distribution such as rice, beans, oatmeal, flour, etc.
- Canned and packaged items -- commercially canned, packaged, or boxed food items, meals or sauces
- Commercially baked goods -- products prepared at a commercial baking establishment
- Dairy products and eggs -- commercially packaged milk, cheeses, yogurt, ice cream, eggs, etc.
- Dessert and sweets -- baked or candy products prepared at a commercial establishment
- Entrees and prepared items -- surplus menu entrees prepared at a commercial food service establishment such as a restaurant, cafeteria, or catered event but not served or offered to the public
- Fresh produce -- any type of fruit or vegetable that is fresh, packaged or loose
- Frozen goods -- commercially packaged frozen food items
- Meats -- meat, poultry, seafood, and processed items - raw or cooked - that have undergone USDA inspection and approval

Step 2: Carefully inspect the food

Ok to donate:

- Food that has been handled and stored according to safe handling guidelines
- Food with packaging or a seal that is unbroken
- Food that has been kept at the correct temperature

Not ok to donate:

- Frozen food that has been thawed and refrozen
- Food that is in a leaking container or has had other material leaked on it

Step 3: Contact a food rescue agency to arrange donation

For help locating nearby food rescue agencies, ask Metro at 503-234-3000 or contact your local government's garbage and recycling program.

Food rescue agencies have different ways of collecting donated food. Most accept deliveries. Many can arrange to pick up donations on an on-call basis or on a regular pre-arranged schedule. Some provide containers for food pickup then replace them with new, clean containers after each use.

Always call ahead to confirm hours of operation and ensure that the organization can accept the items you wish to donate.

Tips for success

Many food rescue agencies rely on volunteer labor. Some are open standard business hours, others have varied schedules. Some prefer to set up regular donation schedules that can be added to their existing routes.

Keep in mind that agencies may lack the capacity to accept all donations, all the time.

When you call a food rescue agency, confirm:

- They accept the food you plan to donate
- Approximate date and time of exchange and hours of operation
- Delivery methods and details such as drop-off or pick-up
- Contact information for people making and receiving donations

Before pickup or delivery, follow safe food handling processes. For information about proper food handling, contact the Oregon Health Authority's Foodborne Illness Prevention Program at 971-673-0451.

In establishing and maintaining relationships with food rescue agencies:

- Develop relationships with agencies that are well-matched to your needs
- Establish a routine and integrate donation into your standard operating procedures
- Always call ahead

Donate the best, compost the rest!

You'd be surprised how much wholesome surplus food you may be able to set aside for donation. However, there is bound to be some food that is unsuitable. In many Metro jurisdictions, you can compost food that cannot be donated along with your kitchen scrap and plate waste.

Ask Metro if your business can integrate composting into your operations and reduce your waste. Call 503-234-3000.

Liability protection

State and federal law may provide protection from liability for those who donate food in good faith. Provisions of the Oregon Good Samaritan Law, specifically ORS sections 30.890 and 30.892, address liability for food donors and donors in general.

The Bill Emerson Food Donation Act, 42 USC section 1791, addresses the civil and criminal liability under federal law of a person who donates food in good faith.

Metro cannot provide legal advice to the public. An entity considering food donation should consult with its own legal counsel regarding liability.